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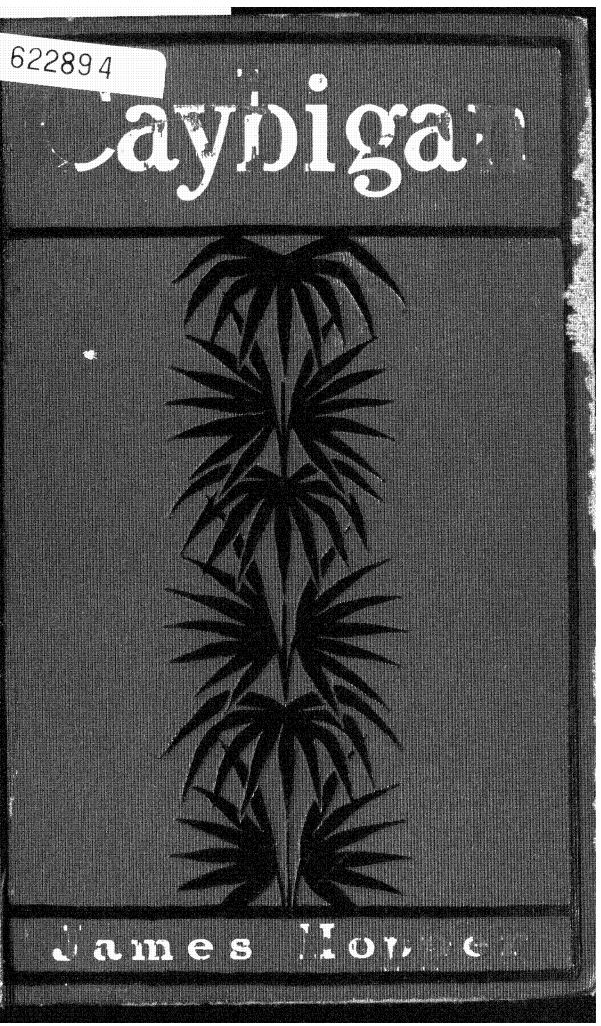

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I

THE JUDGMENT OF MAN

WE were sitting around the big centre table in the sala of the "House of Guests" in Ilo-Ilo. We were teachers from Occidental Negros. It was near Christmas; we had left our stations for the holidays—the cholera had just swept them and the aftermath was not pleasant to contemplate—and so we were leaning over the polished narra table, sipping a sweet, false Spanish wine from which we drew, not a convivial spirit, but rather a quiet, reflective gloom. All the shell shutters were drawn back; we could see the tin-roofed city gleam and crackle with the heat, and beyond the lithe line of coconuts, the iridescent sea, tugging the heart with offer of coolness. But, all of us, we knew the promise to be Fake, monumental Fake, knew the alluring depths to be hot as corruption, and full of sharks.

Somebody in a monotonous voice was cataloguing the dead, enumerating those of us who had been conquered by the climate, by the work, or through their own inward flaws. He mentioned Miller with some

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sort of disparaging gesture, and then Carter of Balangilang, who had been very silent, suddenly burst into speech with singular fury.

"Who are you, to judge him?" he shouted. "Who are you, eh? Who are we, anyway, to judge him?"

Headlong outbursts from Carter were nothing new to us, so we took no offence. Finally someone said, "Well, he's dead," with that tone that signifies final judgment, the last, best, most charitable thing which can be said of the man being weighed.

But Carter did not stop there. "You didn't know him, did you?" he asked. "You didn't know him; tell me now, *did* you know him?" He was still extraordinarily angry.

We did not answer. Really, we knew little of the dead man—excepting that he was mean and small, and not worth knowing. He was mean, and he was a coward; and to us in our uncompromising youth these were just the unpardonable sins. Because of that we had left him alone, yes, come to think of it, very much alone. And we knew little about him.

"Here, I'll tell you what I know," Carter began again, in a more conciliatory tone; "I'll tell you everything I know of him." He lit a cheroot.

"I first met him right here in Ilo-Ilo. I had crossed over for supplies; he was fresh from Manila and

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wanted to get over to Bacolod to report to the Sup. and be assigned to his station. When I saw him he was on the muelle, surrounded by an army of bluffing cargadores. About twelve of them had managed to get a finger upon his lone carpet-bag while it was being carried down the gang-plank, and each and all of them wanted to get paid for the job. He was in a horrible pickle; couldn't speak a word of Spanish or Visayan. And the first thing he said when I had extricated him, thanks to my vituperative knowledge of these sweet tongues, was: 'If them niggahs, seh, think Ah'm a-goin' to learn their cussed lingo, they're mahtily mistaken, seh!'

"After that remark, coming straight from the heart, I hardly needed to be told that he was from the South. He was from Mississippi. He was gaunt, yellow, malarial, and slovenly. He had 'teached' for twenty years, he said, but in spite of this there was about him something indescribably rural, something of the sod—not the dignity, the sturdiness of it, but rather of the pettiness, the sordidness of it. It showed in his dirty, flapping garments, his unlaced shoes, his stubble beard, in his indecent carelessness in expectorating the tobacco he was ceaselessly chewing. But these, after all, were some of his minor traits. I was soon to get an inkling of one of his major ones —his prodigious meanness. For when I rushed about

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and finally found a lorcha that was to sail for Bacolod and asked him to chip in with me on provisions, he demurred.

"'Ah'd like to git my own, seh,' he said in that decisive drawl of his.

"'All right,' I said cheerfully, and went off and stocked up for two. My instinct served me well. When, that evening, Miller walked up the gang-plank, he carried only his carpet-bag, and that was flat and hungry-looking as before. The next morning he shared my provisions calmly and resolutely, with an air, almost, of conscious duty. Well, let that go; before another day I was face to face with his other flaming characteristic.

"Out of Ilo-Ilo we had contrary winds at first; all night the lorcha—an old grandmother of a craft, full of dry-rot spots as big as woodpeckers' nests—flapped heavily about on impotent tacks, and when the sun rose we found ourselves on the same spot from which we had watched its setting. Toward ten o'clock, however, the monsoon veered, and wing-and-wing the old boat, creaking in every joint as if she had the dengue, grunted her way over flashing combers with a speed that seemed almost indecent. Then, just as we were getting near enough to catch the heated glitter of the Bacolod church-dome, to see the golden thread of breach at the foot of the waving coconuts,

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the wind fell, slap-bang, as suddenly as if God had said hush—and we stuck there, motionless, upon a petrified sea.

"I didn't stamp about and foam at the mouth; I'd been in these climes too long. As for Miller, he was from Mississippi. We picked out a comparatively clean spot on the deck, near the bow; we lay down on our backs and relaxed our beings into infinite patience. We had been thus for perhaps an hour; I was looking up at a little white cloud that seemed receding, receding into the blue immensity behind it. Suddenly a noise like thunder roared in my ears. The little cloud gave a great leap back into its place; the roar dwindled into the voice of Miller, in plaintive, disturbed drawl. 'What the deuce are the niggahs doing?' he was saying.

"And certainly the behaviour of that Visayan crew was worthy of question. Huddled quietly at the stern, one after another they were springing over the rail into the small boat that was dragging behind, and even as I looked the last man disappeared with the painter in his hand. At the same moment I became aware of a strange noise. Down in the bowels of the lorcha a weird, gentle commotion was going on, a multitudinous 'gluck-gluck' as of many bottles being emptied. A breath of hot, musty air was sighing out of the hatch. Then the sea about the poop began to

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rise,—to rise slowly, calmly, steadily, like milk in a heated pot.

"'By the powers,' I shouted, 'the old tub is going down!'

"It was true. There, upon the sunlit sea, beneath the serene sky, silently, weirdly, unprovoked, the old boat, as if weary, was sinking in one long sigh of lassitude. And we, of course, were going with it. A few yards away from the sternpost was the jolly-boat with the crew. I looked at them, and in my heart I could not condemn them for their sly departure; they were all there, arraiz, wife, children, and crew, so heaped together that they seemed only a meaningless tangle of arms and legs and heads; the water was half an inch from the gunwale, and the one man at the oars, hampered, paralysed on all sides, was splashing helplessly while the craft pivoted like a top. There was no anger in my heart, yet I was not absolutely reconciled to the situation. I searched the deck with my eyes, then from the jolly-boat the arraiz obligingly yelled, 'El biroto, el biroto!'

"And I remembered the rotten little canoe lashed amidships. It didn't take us long to get it into the water (the water by that time was very close at hand). I went carefully into it first so as to steady it for Miller, and then, both of us at once, we saw that it would hold only one. The bottom, a hollowed log, was

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staunch enough, but the sides, made of pitched bamboo lattice, were sagging and torn. It would hold only one.

"'Well, who is it?' I asked. In my heart there was no craven panic, but neither was there sacrifice. Some vague idea was in my mind, of deciding who should get the place by some game of chance, tossing up a coin, for instance.

"But Miller said, 'Ah cain't affawd to take chances, seh; you must git out.'

"He spoke calmly, with great seriousness, but without undue emphasis—as one enunciating an uncontrovertible natural law. I glanced up into his face, and it was in harmony with his voice. He didn't seem particularly scared; he was serious, that's all; his eyes were set in that peculiar, wide-pupilled stare of the man contemplating his own fixed idea.

"'No, seh; Ah cain't affawd it,' he repeated.

"The absurdity of the thing suddenly tingled in me like wine. 'All right!' I shouted, in a contagion of insanity; 'all right, take the darned thing!'

"And I got out. I got out and let him step stiffly into the boat, which I obligingly sent spinning from the lorcha with one long, strong kick. Then I was alone on the deck, which suddenly looked immense, stretched on all sides, limitless as loneliness itself. A heavy torpor fell from the skies and amid this general

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silence, this immobility, the cabin door alone seemed to live, live in weird manifestation. It had been left open, and now it was swinging and slamming to and fro jerkily, and shuddering from top to bottom. Half in plan, half in mere irritation at this senseless, incessant jigging, I sprang toward it and with one nervous pull tore it, hinge and all, from the rotten woodwork. I heaved it over the side, went in head first after it, took a few strokes and lay, belly-down, upon it. Just then the lorcha began to rise by the head; the bowsprit went up slowly like a finger pointing solemnly to heaven; then, without a sound, almost instantaneously, the whole fabric disappeared. Across the now unoccupied space Miller and I rushed smoothly toward each other, as if drawn by some gigantic magnet; our crafts bumped gently, like two savages caressingly rubbing noses; they swung apart a little and lay side by side, undulating slightly.

"And we remained there, little black specks upon the flashing sea. Two hundred yards away was the lorcha's boat; they had reshuffled themselves more advantageously and were pulling slowly toward land. Not twenty feet from me Miller sat upright in his canoe as if petrified. I was not so badly off. The door floated me half out of water, and that was lukewarm, so I knew that I could stand it a long time. What bothered me, though, was that the blamed raft was

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not long enough; that is, the upper part of my body being heavier, it took more door to support it, so that my feet were projecting beyond the lower edge, and every second or so the nibbling of some imaginary shark sent them flying up into the air in undignified gymnastics. The consoling part of it was that Miller was paying no notice. He still sat up, rigid, in his canoe, clutching the sides stiffly and looking neither to right nor left. From where I lay I could see the cords of his neck drawn taut, and his knuckles showing white.

"'Why the deuce don't you paddle to shore?' I shouted at length, taking a sudden disgust of the situation.

"He did not turn his head as he answered. 'Ah—Ah,' he stammered, the words coming hard as hiccoughs out of his throat; 'Ah don't know haow.'

"'Drop the sides of your boat and try,' I suggested.

"He seemed to ponder carefully over this for a while. 'Ah think it's safer to stay this-a-way,' he decided finally.

"'But, good lord, man,' I cried, angry at this calm stupidity; 'if that's what you're going to do, you'd better get on this door here and let me take the boat. I'll paddle ashore and come back for you.'

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" He turned his head slowly. He contemplated my raft long, carefully, critically.

" ' Ah think Ah'll be safer heyah, seh,' he decided. ' It's a little bit o' old door, and Ah reckon they's a heap of sharks around.'

" After that I had little to say. Given the premises of the man his conclusions were unquestionable. And the premises were a selfishness so tranquil, so ingenuous, so fresh, I might say, that I couldn't work up the proper indignation. It was something so perfect as to challenge admiration. On the whole, however, it afforded a poor subject for conversation; so we remained there, taciturn, I on my door, half-submerged in the tepid water, my heels flung up over my back, he in his dugout, rigid, his hands clutching the sides as if he were trying to hold up the craft out of the liquid abyss beneath.

" And thus we were still when, just as the sun was setting sombrely, a velos full of chattering natives picked us up. They landed us at Bacolod, and Miller left me to report to the Sup. I departed before sun-up the next morning for my station. I didn't want to see Miller again.

" But I did. One night he came floundering through my pueblo. It was in the middle of the rainy season. He wasn't exactly caked with mud; rather, he seemed to ooze it out of every pore. He had been assigned

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to Binalbagan, ten miles further down. I stared when he told me this. Binalbagan was the worst post on the island, a musty, pestilential hole with a sullenly hostile population, and he—well, inefficiency was branded all over him in six-foot letters. I tried to stop him over night, but he would not do it, and I saw him splash off in the darkness, gaunt, yellow, mournful.

"I saw little of him after that. I was busy establishing new barrio-schools which were to give me excuses for long horseback rides of inspection. I felt his presence down there in that vague way by which you are aware of a person behind your back without turning around. Rumours of his doings reached me. He was having a horrible time. On the night of his arrival he had been invited to dinner by the Presidente, a kind old primitive soul, but when he found that he was expected to sit at the table with the family, he had stamped off, indignant, saying that he didn't eat with no niggers. As I've said before, the town was hostile, and this attitude did not help matters much. He couldn't get the school moneys out of the Tesorero—an unmitigated rascal—but that did not make much difference, for he had no pupils anyhow. He couldn't speak a word of Spanish; no one in the town, of course, knew any English—he must have been horribly lonely. He

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began to wear camisas, like the natives. That's always a bad sign. It shows that the man has discovered that there is no one to care how he dresses—that is, that there is no longer any public opinion. It indicates something subtly worse—that the man has ceased looking at himself, that the *I* has ceased criticising, judging, stiffening up the *me*—in other words, that there is no longer any conscience. That white suit, I tell you, is a wonderful moral force; the white suit, put on fresh every morning, heavily starched, buttoned up to the chin, is like an armour, ironcladding you against the germ of decay buzzing about you, ceaselessly vigilant for the little vulnerable spot. Miller wore camisas, and then he began to go without shoes. I saw that myself. I was riding through his pueblo on my way to Dent's, and I passed his school. I looked into the open door as my head bobbed by at the height of the stilt-raised floor. He was in his camisa and barefooted; his long neck stretched out of the collarless garment with a mournful, stork-like expression. Squatting on the floor were three trouserless, dirt-incrusted boys; he was pointing at a chart standing before their eyes, and all together they were shouting some word that exploded away down in their throats in tremendous effort and never seemed to reach their lips. I called out and waved my hand as I went by, and when I looked back, a hundred

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yards farther, I saw that he had come out and was standing upon the bamboo platform outside of the door, gaping after me with his chin thrown forward in that mournful, stork-like way—I should have gone back.

"With him, I must say, the camisa did not mean all that I have suggested, not the sort of degradation of which it is the symbol in other men. The most extravagant imagination could not have linked him with anything that smacked of romance, romance however sordid. His vices, I had sized it, would come rather from an excess of calculation than from a lack of it. No, that camisa was just a sign of his meanness, his prodigious meanness. And of that I was soon given an extraordinary example.

"I had with me a young fellow named Ledesma, whom I was training to be assistant maestro. He was very bright, thirsty to learn, and extremely curious of us white men. I don't believe that the actions of one of them, for fifty miles around, ever escaped him, and every day he came to me with some talk, some rumour, some gossip about my fellow-exiles which he would relate to me with those strange interrogative inflections that he had brought from his native dialect into English—as if perpetually he were seeking explanation, confirmation. One morning he said to me: 'The maestro Miller, he does not eat.'

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"'No?' I answered, absent-mindedly.

"'No, he never eats,' he reiterated authoritatively, although that peculiar Visayan inflection of which I have spoken gave him the air of asking a question.

"'Oh, I suppose he does,' I said, carelessly.

"'He does not eat,' he repeated. 'Everyone in Binalbagan say so. Since he there, he has not bought anything at the store.'

"'His muchachos bring him chicken,' I suggested.

"'No, señor; he very funny; he has no muchachos, not one muchacho has he.'

"'Well, he probably has canned provisions sent him.'

"'No, señor; the cargadores they say that never, never have they carried anything for him. He does not eat.'

"'Very well,' I concluded, somewhat amused; 'he does not eat.'

"The boy was silent for a minute, then, 'Señor Maestro,' he asked with suspicious ingenuousness, 'can Americans live without eating?'

"So that I was not able to drop the subject as easily as I wished. And coming to a forced consideration of it, I found that my anxiety to do so was not very beautiful after all. A picture came to me—that of Miller on his bamboo platform before his

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door, gazing mournfully after me, his chin thrown forward. It did not leave me the day long, and at sundown I saddled up and trotted off toward Binalbagan.

"I didn't reach the pueblo that night, however. Only a mile from it I plunged out of the moonlight into the pitch darkness of a hollow lane cutting through Don Jaime's hacienda. Banana palms were growing thick to right and left; the way was narrow and deep—it was a fine place for cutthroats, but that evocation had lost much of its romantic charm from the fact that, not three weeks before, an actual cutthroating had taken place, a Chinese merchant having been boloed by tusilanes. Well, I was trotting through, my right hand somewhat close to my holster, when from the right, close, there came a soft, reiterated chopping noise. I pulled up my pony. The sound kept up—a discreet, persistent chopping; then I saw, up above, the moonlit top of a palm shuddering, though all about it the others remained motionless, petrified as if of solid silver. It was a very simple thing after all: someone in there was cutting down a palm to get bananas, an occupation very common in the Philippines, and very pacific, in spite of the ominous air given to it by the gigantic bolo used. However, something prompted me to draw the midnight harvester out.

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"'Heh, ladron, what are you doing there?' I shouted in dialect.

"There was a most sudden silence. The chopping ceased, the palm stopped vibrating. A vague form bounded down the lane, right up against my horse's nose, rolled over, straightened up again, and vanished into the darkness ahead. Unconsciously I spurred on after it. For a hundred yards I galloped with nothing in sight. Then I caught a rapid view of the thing as it burst through a shaft of moonlight piercing the glade, and it showed as a man, a grotesque figure of a man in loose white pantaloons. He was frightened, horribly frightened, all hunched up with the frenzy to escape. An indistinct bundle was on his right shoulder. Like a curtain the dark snapped shut behind him again, but I urged on with a wild halloo, my blood all a-tingle with the exultation of the chase. I gained—he must have been a lamentable runner, for my poor little pony was staggering under my tumultuous weight. I could hear him pant and sob a few yards in advance; then he came into sight, a dim, loping whiteness ahead. Suddenly the bundle left his shoulder; something rolled along the ground under my horse's hoofs—and I was standing on my head in a soft, oozy place. I was mad, furiously mad. I picked myself up, went back a few yards and, taking my pony by the nose,

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picked *him* up. A touch of his throbbing flanks, however, warned me as I was putting my foot into the stirrup. I left him there and thundered on foot down the lane. I have said I was mad. 'Yip-yip-yah-ah, yip-yip-yah-ah,' I yelled as I dashed on—a yell I had heard among California cattlemen. It must have paralysed that flying personage, for I gained upon him shockingly. I could hear him pant, a queer, patient panting, a sigh rather, a gentle, lamenting sighing, and the white camisa flapped ghostily in the darkness. Suddenly he burst out of obscurity, past the plantation, into the glaring moonlight. And I—I stopped short, went down on my hands and knees, and crouched back into the shadow. For the man running was Miller; Miller, wild, sobbing, dishevelled, his shoulders drawn up to his ears in terrible weariness, his whole body taut with fear, and scudding, scudding away, low along the ground, his chin forward, mournful as a stork. Soon he was across the luminous space, and then he disappeared into the darkness on the other side, flopped head first into it as if hiding his face in a pillow.

"I returned slowly to my horse. He was standing where I had left him, his four legs far apart in a wide base. Between them was the thing cast off by Miller which had thrown us. I examined it by the light of a box of matches. It was a bunch of bananas,

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one of those gigantic clusters which can be cut from the palms. I got on my horse and rode back home.

"I didn't go to see him any more. A man who will steal bananas in a country where they can be bought a dozen for one cent is too mean to be worth visiting. I had another reason, too. It had dawned on me that Miller probably did not care to see any of us, that he had come down to a mode of life which would not leave him appreciative of confrontations with past standards. It was almost charity to leave him to himself.

"So I left him to himself, and he lived on in his pestilential little hole, alone—lived a life more squalid every day. It wasn't at all a healthy life, you can understand, no healthier physically than morally. After a while I heard that he was looking bad, yellow as a lemon and the dengue cracking at his bones. I began to think of going to him after all, of jerking him out of his rut by force, if necessary, making him respect the traditions of his race. But just then came that Nichols affair, and flaring, his other bad side—his abject cowardice—reappeared to me. You remember the Nichols thing—boloed in the dark between my town and Himamaylan. His muchacho had jumped into the ditch. Afterward he got out and ran back the whole way, fifteen miles, to my place. I started down there. My idea was to pick up Miller

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as I passed, then Dent a little further down, find the body, and perhaps indications for White of the constabulary to whom I had sent a messenger and who could not reach the place till morning. Well, Miller refused to go. He had caught hold of some rumour of the happening; he was barricaded in his hut and was sitting on his bed, a big Colt's revolver across his knees. He would not go, he said it plainly. 'No, seh; Ah cain't take chances; Ah cain't affawd it.' He said this without much fire, almost tranquilly, exactly as he had, you remember, at the time of our shipwreck. It was not so amusing now, however. Here, on land, amid this swarming, mysterious hostility, at this crisis, it seemed a shocking betrayal of the solidarity that bound us all white men. A red rage took possession of me. I stood there above him and poured out vituperation for five good minutes. I found the most extraordinary epithets; I lowered my voice and pierced him with venomous thrusts. He took it all. He remained seated on his bed, his revolver across his knees, looking straight at some spot on the floor; whenever I'd become particularly effective he'd merely look harder at the spot, as if for him it contained something of higher significance—a command, a rule, a precept—I don't know what, and then he'd say, 'No, Ah cain't; Ah cain't affawd it.'

"I burst out of there, a-roar like a bombshell. I

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rode down to Dent; we rode down to the place and did —what there was to be done. Miller, I never wanted to see again.

"But I did. Some three weeks later a carrier came to me with a note—a pencilled scrawl upon a torn piece of paper. It read:

"'I think I am dying. Can you come see me?

'MILLER.'

"I went down right away. He was dead. He had died there, alone, in his filthy little hut, in that God-forsaken pueblo, ten miles from the nearest white man, ten thousand miles from his home. He had died there all alone.

"I'll always remember our coming in. It was night. It had been raining for thirty-six hours, and as we stepped into the unlighted hut, my muchacho and I, right away the floor grew sticky and slimy with the mud on our feet, and as we groped about blindly, we seemed ankle-deep in something greasy and abominable like gore. After a while the boy got a torch outside, and as he flared it I caught sight of Miller on his cot, backed up into one corner. He was sitting upright, staring straight ahead and a little down, as if in careful consideration. As I stepped toward him the pliable bamboo floor undulated; the move-

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ment was carried to him and he began to nod, very gently and gravely. He seemed to be saying: 'No, Ah cain't affawd it.' It was atrocious. Finally I was by his side and he was again motionless, staring thoughtfully. Then I saw what he was considering. In his hands, which lay twined on his knees, were a lot of little metallic oblongs. I disengaged them. The muchacho drew nearer, and with the torch over my shoulder I examined them. They were photographs, cheap tintypes. The first was of a woman, a poor being, sagging with overwork, a lamentable baby in her arms. The other pictures were of children—six of them, boys and girls, of all ages from twelve to three, and under each, in painful chirography, a name was written—Lee Miller, Amy Miller, Geraldine Miller, and so on.

"You don't understand, do you? For a moment I didn't understand. I stared stupidly at those tintypes, shuffled and reshuffled them; the torch roared in my ear. Then, suddenly, understanding came to me; it came sharp as a pang. He had a wife and children—seven children.

"A simple fact, wasn't it, a commonplace one, almost vulgar, you might say. And yet what a change of view produced by it, what a dislocation of judgment! I was like a man riding through a strange country, in a storm, at night. It is dark, he cannot

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see, he has never seen the country, yet as he rides on he begins to picture to himself the surroundings, his imagination builds for him a landscape—a mountain there, a river here, wind-streaming trees over there—and right away it exists, it *is*, it has solidity, mass, life. Then suddenly comes a flash of lightning, a second of light, and he is astounded, absolutely astounded to see the real landscape different from that indestructible thing that his mind had built. Thus it was with me. I had judged, oh, I had judged him thoroughly, sized him up to a certainty, and bang, came the flare of this new fact, this extremely commonplace fact, and I was all off, all off. I must begin to judge again, only it would never do that man any good.

"A hundred memories came back to me, glared at me in the illumination of that new fact. I remembered the camisa, the bare feet. I saw him running down the lane with his bunch of stolen bananas. I recalled that absurd scene on the waters; I heard him say: 'No, seh; Ah cain't affawd to take chances; Ah cain't affawd it.'

"Of course he couldn't afford it. Think—a wife and seven children!

"That night I went through his papers, putting things in order, and from every leaf, every scrap, came corroboration of the new fact. It was easy

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enough to patch up his life. He was one of those pitiful pedagogues of the rural South, shiftless, half-educated, inefficient. He had never been able to earn much, and his family had always gently starved. Then had come the chance, the golden chance—the Philippines and a thousand a year. He had taken the bait, had come ten thousand miles to the spot of his maximum value. Only, things had not gone quite right. Thanks to the beautiful red-tape of the department, three months had gone before he had received his first month's pay. Then it had come in Mex., and when he had succeeded in changing it into gold it had dwindled to sixty dollars. Of course, he had sent it all back, for even then it would take it six more weeks to reach its destination, and sixty dollars is hardly too much to tide over five months for a family of eight. These five months had to be caught up in some way, so every month his salary, depreciated ten per cent. by the change, had gone across the waters. He wore camisas and no shoes, he stole bananas. And his value, shoeless, camisa-clothed, was sixty dollars a month. He was just so much capital. He had to be careful of that capital.

"'Ah cain't affawd to take chances; Ah cain't affawd it.' Of course he couldn't.

"And so he had fought on blindly, stubbornly,

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and, at last, with that pitiful faculty we have, all of us, of defeating our own plans, he had killed himself, he had killed the capital, the golden goose.

"Yes, I found confirmation, but, after all, I did not need it. I had learned it all; understanding had come to me, swift, sharp, vital as a pang, when in the roaring light of the torch I had looked upon the pale little tintypes, the tintypes of Lee and Amy and Jackson and Geraldine."

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II

THE MAESTRO OF BALANGILANG

THE Maestro of Balangilang opened the door of his nipa-hut and started down the crazy bamboo ladder on his way to the school. It was early. The sun was pumping back the water that had fallen through the night, and the grass-dishevelled common, the palm-groves about, the musty mountains to the east, the whole landscape, steamed like one great cauldron. Caribaos were wallowing in the mudholes, a dozen dogs were fighting at the church portals, a stream of brownies were pouring into the schoolhouse, and, in front of the cuartel, the company of native scouts were going through scientific evolutions.

The Maestro stopped at the bottom of the steps and took in the scene with a wistful attempt at admiration. A vague discouragement oozed into his soul, but he shook himself vigorously and started across. Through the viscid atmosphere he cut his way in sprightly fashion. His long legs snapped back and forth like springs. At regular intervals his chest swelled; it remained puffed out like that of a pouter-pigeon while he took twenty steps, then collapsed

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with the hollow report of an air gun. He was finishing up his morning calisthenics.

As he reached the centre of the plaza an unfamiliar object stopped him abruptly. It was only a cross, a rough cross made of two pieces of bamboo fastened at right angles with bejuca and stuck into the ground, but it seemed to have meaning to the Maestro. He walked up close to it and examined it carefully. He was disappointed for a moment; then his fingers, passing along the horizontal piece, touched a thorn stuck like a nail in the axis of the cross. Holding his breath, for it was not yet time to exhale, he nodded knowingly and his eyes searched the ground about him. They soon lit upon what he wanted. He pounced upon a bunch of wild palay, stooped, and was up again with something white in his hand.

It was a piece of paper, limp and bespattered with the night's rain, but on which characters in native Visayan were still visible. The Maestro pored over it closely, then his pent-up breath exploded.

"Papa Isio," he exclaimed gaily. "The Mad Pope is coming to see us."

He stopped, with thought upon his brow.

"I lost my home and punching-bag at it once," he said, musingly. "Well, we'll give him a scrimmage this time."

After which somewhat incoherent remark he folded

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the sodden bit of paper carefully into his pocket, took a new deep breath, and walked on. As he approached the drilling company of scouts he saw with pleasure that Lieutenant Roberts was back from his tour of inspection and was at their head.

"Hello, Roberts," he shouted, with easy cordiality, as he came within hearing distance. "Hello, Roberts, old man; putting the boys through signal-practice, eh?"

The officer, who had just assumed a fine attitude—arms folded at the height of the chin, legs glued together in a gracefully curved column, chest projected forward till it threw a shadow upon the ground—did not respond with effusion.

"Present—Hums!" he said. "Carr-ie-ie—Hums! Shoulder—Hums!"

The Maestro took off his cap and, raising his freckled face to heaven, shook his head vigorously. A wealth of carrot-red hair parted at the crown and cascaded down the temples; and with the thus restored vision of two green eyes he observed the performance of the little brown soldiers critically.

"Pretty fine, Lieut," he said, encouragingly. "Very fair team-work; they'll do. You ought to see what *I've* taught them, though. I'll show you after drill. It's something scrumptious."

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"Parade — Rest! Attentio-ion! Port — Hums! Shoulder—Hums!" said the officer.

"Yes, they'll do for signal-practice all right," resumed the youth, in soothing, patronising tones. "But," he went on, with a little of suggestive criticism in his voice, "what about the real thing, Lieut? What about their shooting, eh? I'm blest if I've ever seen them discharge anything except blanks, have you?"

"Fours right—March! Column left!"

"Hep, hep, hep," came the column straight for the schoolmaster. The Lieutenant was muttering something in his mustache that sounded like a benediction. For a long six months, since the organisation of the company, a prudent government had denied his pleadings for permission to give his men target practice. The Scouts were an experiment, and there was a vague feeling that they should not be taught too much.

"Why is that, Roberts?" persisted the Maestro, calmly dodging the advancing phalanx and dropping into the confidential manner. "Why don't you let them shoot? Are you afraid that they might begin on your broad back? Are you——"

A sudden start of pain closed his mouth. The Lieutenant had quietly planted his heel, in passing, upon the Educational toe, crushing down upon it with all

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the enthusiasm of two hundred pounds a-thrill with long-suppressed rage.

The Maestro's eyes followed the officer, marching at the side of his company. His mouth opened in a broad grin that displayed a startling vacuum where once had been two good teeth, now lying peacefully on the sod of the old Berkeley gridiron.

"Guess it's school-time," he said.

He sprinted fifty yards, leaped an eighteen-foot ditch, hurdled a little goat, bucked a carabao around till its tail was where its head had been, and bounded into the schoolroom.

Two hundred brown niños sprang to their feet.

"Guda morrneen," they howled, in unison.

"Good-morning," answered the Maestro, briskly. "Come, let's get at this. No shirking, quick! Arm exercise! One, two; one, two."

He led them through a furious set of exercises in which he himself took part enthusiastically, the perspiration cascading down his nose.

"You poor, scrawny weaklings," he said, at last, beaming upon the breathless little assemblage. "Never you mind; I'll make men of you."

Then he started to go. "Give them reading," he shouted to his native assistant from the door, "and breathing exercises every half hour."

But he came back, on an after-thought, and placed

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under the nose of his faithful colleague the piece of sodden paper he had picked up on the plaza.

The man's skin went yellow beneath the brown. "Papa Isio," he whispered.

"Just what I thought," said the Maestro, nodding to himself. "And he says he is coming here, doesn't he?"

"Yes, sir. He will come and burn the pueblo. That is the way he burned Cabayan last year."

"Gol darn it, don't I know it?" ejaculated the pedagogue, fiercely. "And didn't I lose my brand-new seven-dollar Spalding punching-bag? Well, we'll set him on his head this time."

"Yes, sir," meekly answered the assistant, who had not caught the full import of the explosive questions.

But the maestro did not hear him. He was out already and making his way to the cuartel. Roberts was dismissing the company when he arrived.

"Hello, you take them now," said the officer, as he saw the Maestro—Professor of Military Gymnastics also, by common consent—near him. "And, by the way," he added, with suppressed glee, "how's the toe?"

The Maestro did not answer. He was working at the inside of his khaki jacket. With some trouble

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he drew out a flat, oblong box. From this he took a piece of yellow leather and a shining object that looked like a bicycle pump. He inserted the mouth of the pump into a hole in the leather and worked the handle up and down in rapid movement. The thing began to swell and take shape. Finally it looked like a great leather egg. He threw it on the ground, toward one of the loafing soldiers, and the latter, as an automaton worked by some powerful spring, hurled himself headfirst at it, grasped it inside of both arms, and lay on it, while the rest of the company poured upon him in an avalanche.

"How's that, eh?" asked the schoolmaster, turning upon the Lieutenant an eye that winked.

He did not wait for an answer. At a signal the company had formed into a long, crouching line. He placed himself behind it, took a quick step, and booted the pigskin a resounding whack. At the sound the whole line galloped off in ferocious pursuit, and when, after describing a beautiful parabola, the ball bumped along the ground, it was smothered at the second bounce beneath the gross weight of the company.

"And how's that?" asked the Maestro, in tone still more compelling.

He turned to his men. "The 'Varsity," he called, a trifle pompously.

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Eleven men stood out from the rest and lined up in a team.

"Six, eight, fifteen!" he shouted.

The team went through the pantomime of a fierce mass on centre.

"Four, fifteen, twenty-two."

The team swirled around in an end-run.

Then he hurled signals at them, and, in quick succession, with a tangle here and there, it is true, they went through an entire repertory—cross tackle bucks, straight openings, tandems, kangaroos, revolving masses, double and delayed passes, fake kicks. They massed and bucked the air about as if it offered no resistance. It was beautiful to see.

"And now, behold!" said the engineer of this fine performance, pausing solemnly.

He drew a line in the earth with his heel and placed the ball upon it. The quarterback took his position near the ball and the rest of the team gathered some twenty yards away.

"Five, twenty-four, six X!" barked the Maestro.

There was a rapid movement among the men, and then they shot out in a long V. On the walk at first, then on the trot, then at full gallop the V swept down toward the line. The quarterback stooped, picked up the ball, and dexterously passed it as the formation thundered down upon him. The ball disappeared,

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swallowed up within the V, which, passing the line with tremendous impetus, rumbled on like a battering-ram to a glorious touch-down.

"The flying wedge," announced the Maestro, in the tone of the knickerbockered flunkey ushering his Grace, the Lord Hunter of the Billion Mark, into the Reception Hall. "Barred out in the States, but, lordy, we're so far way, and it's such a good one, that I thought I'd give it to them anyhow. Well, what do you think of *my* team-work, eh?"

The Lieutenant pondered a moment in silent malevolence.

"Yes," he said, "pretty fair for signal-practice. But what about the *real* thing, eh? Why don't they *get* at each other? I don't see them *scrimmage*, do you?"

A cloud obscured the radiance of the Maestro's visage.

"Well," he said, ruefully, "we're in the Philippines. My team can run signals, but you can't expect them to play. And," he added, in sudden consolation, "your Scouts can drill, but they won't fight."

The situation had become tense beyond words, and the Maestro gracefully evoluted.

"Papa Isio is coming," he said. "I picked up his announcement this morning in the middle of the plaza."

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"Papa Isio is a common carabao thief," said the Lieutenant. "Besides, our troops have killed him already five distinct times and he doesn't exist. And it's not up to me, anyhow. Go see Hafner."

So the Maestro went off to see Hafner. Leopold Joseph Hafner, First Lieutenant of Scouts, U. S. A., Commandant of the Post of Balangilang, was reclining in an easy-chair on his veranda, a bottle of gin under his nose. He greeted his visitor with a blank stare. The Commandant disapproved of pedagogues, and, in fact, of civilians in general.

"Hello, Lieut," shouted the Maestro, with an irreverence that would have sent a shudder along the spine of a neutral witness. "Here's a piece of paper for you."

The Commandant examined the paper.

"Well?" he said, at length, with an indifference calculated to crush.

"Oh, nothing. Only that Papa Isio is coming. That's the way he announced his visit when I was at Cabayan last spring, and he burned the town down and my punching bag, and made hash of the——"

He stopped with a little gurgle of dismay. Hafner had risen from the ranks by a Teutonic adhesion to regulations, and rumour, supported by his mannerisms, had it that his début in the army had been culinary. The remark about the fate of the inhab-

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itants of Cabayan was harmless; the little gurgle was not.

"And what business is that of yours?" asked the Commandant, with a snort.

"Not much. Thought you'd like to know, so as to get ready——"

"Sir," interrupted the Commandant, pompously, "the American Army is always ready."

"I was speaking of your Scouts, sir," the Maestro corrected, suavely.

He had been maneuvering toward the door during the latter part of the dialogue, and with the last word he waved an airy good-by and hop-skipped-jumped down the stairs.

The next day Papa Isio was in town.

The Commandant and his Second Lieutenant were aware of the fact at the same time. For, startled out of their morning slumbers by a screeching tumult, they sprang to their windows to see the whole population of Balangilang driving past as if the demon were after them—men, women, children, half-dressed, dishevelled, their eyes bursting out of their sockets, carrying bundles of hastily snatched goods or squalling babies. And from this multitude, flying by like nightmare creatures, there came one long, wailing cry: "Papa Isio! Papa Isio!"

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Against the black-blue background of the mountains, over which one golden ray of sun was just sliding like a long rapier lunging toward the heart of the city, volutes of smoke were rising heavily in the water-logged air. Beneath, spiteful red tongues leaped up and out again with explosive cracklings. The whole eastern part of the pueblo was burning.

The officers ran to the cuartel. The men were in an uproar. With the force of habit, acquired through the countless parade drills which had been their sole military experience, they had made a concerted rush and were ferociously fighting among themselves for the combs and brushes and shoe-blacking.

"Here, here," thundered Roberts, while Hafner fumbled at the iron door of the storeroom where was the carefully guarded ammunition; "here, here, you don't need to comb your hair. Get your guns and cartridge-belts."

His additional persuasion was physical and evidently potent, for when the men filed past Hafner to get their ammunition they all had their rifles in hand and their belts around their waists, though some had not had time to don other garments generally regarded, in more social crises at least, as indispensable. They poured out, were rapidly formed in front of the cuartel, and, as they deployed across the plaza,

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from the smoke ahead Papa Isio's mad mountaineers emerged in convulsive charge. A drainage ditch cut the town transversely and the Scouts dropped neatly into it; then their rifles slid out between the grass tufts like venomous things.

"Fire at will!" bellowed the Commandant.

Here the Regulations, which hitherto had unwaveringly rewarded Hafner for his respect of them, suddenly went faithless.

"During the final rush of the attacking party," they say, categorically, "firing should be at will, for then the rapidity of fire and the flatness of trajectory are more to be relied upon than accuracy."

But—alas!—the peculiar moral characteristics of the Balangilang Scouts had not been considered when the Regulations were elaborated.

The flatness of trajectory worked poorly. At first pop the majority of the Scouts emptied their magazines like bunches of firecrackers. Most of the bullets sped towards the rising sun, to whisper the story of their masters' unsteady nerves to the trees in the hills. To be just, however, it must be recorded that some ploughed up the ground directly beneath the marksmen's noses. Even then the mere noise—which was positively tremendous—might have checked the advance of the attackers had they not been Papa Isio's own Dios-Dios crew of mad, weird fellows, hurled on

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by that religious spirit which kills so finely. Their Mad Pope was sending them to everlasting glory, and Death would only expedite the voyage. On they came, howling, mouth-distorted, muscles convulsively tense, a foaming, maniacal band. At their head a big black man with rolling eyeballs bounded, waving a long lance ending in a blood-dipped standard. The war drums hummed in rhythm.

The Scouts were not at ease. Some were still peppering at the sun, but the majority were fighting their rifles, trying to reload them with stiff, clutching fingers that did not work expeditiously, or pounding at them with a rage that told of something jammed. Running up and down behind the line, the two officers were waving their swords, shouting and cursing in an attempt to reinstill in their men that automatic regularity which had been their fond pride. But the strings were broken and the puppets worked spasmodically. The incoming rush was only a hundred yards away. Suddenly, with a wonderful burst of speed, the big standard-bearer spurted ahead of his companions. A Scout rose from the trench and aimed his rifle, when the blood-dripping rag described a rapid parabola and was sticking flaccidly on the soldier's khaki, the handle quivering behind. Hafner saw the hands go up, clutching at the sun.

"With the bayonet—charge," he bellowed.

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"Hold on," screamed Roberts, in frenzied warning; "they haven't had that yet!"

And then he found himself surrounded, pushed, jostled, swept away in a furious stampede. Though they "hadn't had it," the men were charging, but it was in the wrong direction. Across the plaza they avalanched, toward the stone church, and when Roberts flowed in with the tumultuous current, he had a vision of the Commandant, purple and spitting with rage, at his elbow. The heavy doors clanged shut behind them.

There was a moment of silence. The men were panting in a corner with the "I-couldn't-help-it" air of a young dog whose inherited tendencies have proved too strong for his acquired characteristics. The officers looked at each other blankly.

"Well," said Roberts, "we ought to hold 'em here, sure."

"Hold them!" screeched the Commandant. "Why, blank, blankety, blank, blank, these forsaken, evil-parented, divinity-doomed curs should drive the measly, meanly-pedigreed carabao thieves clean off this evil earth. Why, doom my soul——"

"Well, let's see about it," said Roberts, briskly, while his superior choked in a befuddlement of rage.

He ran up the gallery steps to one of the six great

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windows which overlooked the plaza. He peered out guardedly, then with more confidence; his nose went out, then his head; his shoulders followed, his whole bust, and he was standing in the opening, his whole wide area in full view. His lower jaw hung in limp astonishment.

For what he saw was not at all what he had expected to see.

The Dios-Dios men were not surrounding the church. For some inexplicable reason they had stopped at the ditch. From his elevated position the Lieutenant could see them inside the trench, huddled like fish in a basket. Their fine ardour had singularly cooled. Grovellingly they flattened themselves at the bottom of the ditch, fighting for the underneath position, squirming in such convulsions as are ascribed to a certain gentleman of mediæval legends when sprinkled with holy water. And when Roberts searched for some possible explanation, a fresh surprise puckered his lips in a low whistle. For, strewn over a space extending some fifty yards on the near side of the trench, there were six or seven bodies lying face downward, with arms outstretched toward the church. The Dios-Dios men had not stopped at the trench; they had passed it and had been driven back to it by some mysterious catastrophe. Among the bodies Roberts recognised that of the big epilep-

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tic leader of the charge, his gory standard a red spot in a bunch of cogon.

The movements in the trench were increasing in vehemence. Suddenly Roberts knew the cause. To his ears, inattentive from the very intensity of his visual observation, there now came a significant sound. At regular, business-like intervals the sharp ping-ing of a Mauser carbine split the air, dying off in a long-drawn whistle. The Lieutenant succeeded in locating the sound. It came from a deserted hut—seemingly from its roof—at the upper end of the ditch.

The thing was clear now. The mysterious sharp-shooter had the Dios-Dios men enfiladed. And the movements in the ditch were not all actuated by search for shelter. They were convulsive somersaults; stiff hands clutched at earth and grass. A little red stream began to trickle out of the lower end of the ditch.

The Dios-Dios men were becoming demoralised. The report of a Mauser is difficult to locate to the most experienced; to the fanatics the thing was impalpable mystery. And the plaza was deserted. If there had been only some human presence to rekindle their rage, they might have gone on in their mad race. But there was nothing. The Scouts were secure in the big stone church. The long, flat plaza was dead; the sun dripped into craniums like molten

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lead, and from the nowhere hailed the weird missiles, shattering arms, puncturing bodies, bursting open heads. One man crawled back, two followed, ten in a bunch, and in another minute the tall grass was all alive with sinuous movements and there was nobody in the trench, nothing except limp heaps of what looked like cast-off clothing.

The door of the hut marked by Roberts flew open as if by explosion and the Maestro burst out, a smoking gun in his right hand, a revolver in his left, another revolver and a bolo in his belt. With a piratical yell he raced across the plaza, his long legs working smooth as well-greased machinery, his red hair flying behind him. When midway along the trench he leaped upon a mound left by the excavators and stretched out in bold relief. A strange war-cry, beginning with something about some husky wow-wow (whoever he might be), passing on to a no less interesting fact about a whisky wee-wee, rising through a tremulous crescendo about some sort of a yah, and culminating in a long, shrill whoop, reverberated atrociously over the deserted battlefield. Then the gun that had waved through these vocal convulsions dropped back to the Maestro's shoulder, and a rapid fusilade gave a pronounced accentuation to the waving of the grass along the line of smouldering nipa-huts.

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Roberts tried to dodge away from the window, but he was too late. The Maestro, through with his flourish, had turned and spied him. Roberts could see the tooth-lacking mouth agape in a broad grin. The Maestro waved his hand amiably. "Come on," said the gesture, reassuringly. "Come on; it's all right now." A violent blush rose to the officer's face.

But he had not time for self-analysis. Along the ruins, at the farther edge of the plaza, the Dios-Dios men were reforming. The panic-stricken groups were being coalesced in a triple line, and between these lines a strange being, in a long robe and incongruous helmet, was slowly passing in weird ceremony. It was the Mad Pope himself. He was locking the lines hand in hand. As he passed before his followers, each took his bolo between his teeth and grasped the hand of the man to the right; and over the clasp the illumined leader made the sign of the cross. It was grotesque, but not laughable. The puerility of garb and ceremonial was lost in the significance of the result. The Dios-Dios hysteria flamed anew. It was as if a monkey had invoked the Death Angel and the Death Angel had answered.

Roberts was leaving the window in haste when his last sweeping glance over the plaza froze him again in attention.

It seemed to him that the red rag which signalled

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the position of the leader of the first charge had moved. It seemed nearer, fully ten paces nearer, to the ditch than when he had first espied it. And now, even as he looked, the thing advanced sinuously and a bronze body glistened between the bunches of grass in a rapid crawl of ten feet or more toward the unconscious schoolmaster who, with his back to the subtle danger, was now watching alertly ahead.

The Lieutenant's hands went to his mouth in a warning halloo.

"Hey, there," he shouted, "look out in back there. In back, in back."

But the Maestro did not understand. The word "back," which he caught, was not to his liking.

"Oh, hell!" floated back the irreverent answer. "*I'm* all right. Come on, you fellows. *I'll* hold them."

Roberts desisted. There was no time for further dialogue. The Dios-Dios lines were beginning to move forward. And besides, at that particular moment, the Lieutenant did not care much what happened to the amiable pedagogue. He clattered downstairs.

The men were lined up, blinking before the flashes of Hafner's sword and language. The doors were thrown open and the company rushed out. Almost at the same time, from the other side of the plaza, the triple line of hand-locked fanatics began to move forward.

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It was a race for the ditch and the Maestro, and a comfortable one, seemingly, for the Scouts, who had but half of the distance to go. But Roberts, through with the temporary vexation caused by the Maestro's peculiar ways, led his men at a furious pace. His sword in his left hand, his revolver in his right, his whole big frame vibrating with the effort, he raced ahead with an energy that seemed very unnecessary to Hafner, who, puffing, was falling farther and farther behind. For the Dios-Dios men were being seriously hampered in their advance. The Papa's hand-locked formation doubtless had its advantages morally, but it had also its disadvantages materially. The Maestro's carbine was working busily, and soon there were dents in the Dios-Dios lines, and some of the hand-clasps were strong with the tenacity not of life, but of death. The Scouts had the race well in hand, but still Roberts tugged ahead, snarling with the effort. Behind the Maestro he could see a tell-tale undulation of the high grass, nearer and nearer. He was only a few yards from the trench now. Suddenly a panther-lithe form bounded from the ground behind the schoolmaster and a big black man with upraised arms, terminating in a kriss, stood out in relief. Roberts's revolver spit. The black arms whizzed down with a velocity hardly lessened by the limpness of death. There was a dull thud; the schoolmaster rolled slowly

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into the ditch, and the big black man pitched headlong down upon him.

"By ——, too bad," muttered Roberts, and then his revolver spluttered. The situation was not bad. The Scouts had gained the trench in good time. Bunched together and firing by platoon, they were doing better. The Dios-Dios line received each volley with a shivering bow, and if this involuntary courtesy proved the firing to be still too high, it no less showed that it was at least within whistling distance. The ardour of the advance waned gradually; at last the lines stopped in indecision. The more rabid fanatics were still tugging forward, the others were holding back, and the lines vibrated between the two impulses without advancing. It was the psychological moment.

"Time for a charge, eh?" Roberts shouted, turning to his superior.

But that gentleman was sleeping quietly, his face in the grass, and a shivered lance-handle by his side.

"With the bayonet—charge!" bellowed Roberts, taking command.

He took a few steps in advance and found himself alone. The Scouts were satisfied with their position; they settled a little deeper in the trench and peppered away valiantly.

"Charge, darn you, charge!" screeched Roberts, pricking the nearest men with his sword.

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But the few minutes of oral instruction upon charging, given in the church, proved inadequate. Three or four—those who had come in closest contact with Roberts's persuasion—started out convulsively, took a few steps, and suddenly flopped back into the ditch like frogs into a puddle.

The Dios-Dios lines were stiffening now. With the Maestro's rifle quiet, their immunity from punishment was encouraging. Back of them, upright on a mound, the pseudo-sainted form of Papa Isio stood with arms stretched to heaven in fervent exhortation. The more valiant began to prevail. The lines began to move forward again.

"Oh, Lord," groaned Roberts, "if the little skunks would only charge."

And then from the depths of the trench there slowly emerged a strange, inchoate, human thing. As it rose it segregated; one half of it fell off in a big black, limp body. The rest continued unfolding, up and up, till finally it stood in full view, a weird, bloody, red-haired, dishevelled spectre. It tottered unsteadily on the talus and then a shrill, unearthly voice quavered:

"Five, twenty-four, six X!"

There was a movement in the trench.

"Five, twenty-four, six X!" again wailed the lamentable voice.

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A little group of men sprang out of the trench and charged in a V a-down the square; the rest of the company poured out in helter-skelter pursuit. Before this incongruous advance the Dios-Dios lines, who had seen enough miracles for one day, broke, turned, and fled. A small body held their ground, and the Scouts struck them with a crumpling crash. For three minutes it was bayonet against bolo, and Roberts's revolver turned the scales. In another minute the plaza was cleared and the last of Papa Isio's forces were disappearing among the burned huts with bayonets at their backs.

When Roberts returned with his elated soldiers he found the pueblo occupied by a detachment sent from Bago. A stretcher was starting on a tour of the field, but Roberts ran ahead of it to the centre of the plaza.

His attention had been caught by a vague movement there. Through the high grass he could see something struggling and bounding in sudden, sharp movement.

It was the inevitable Maestro. He was on top of Hafner, who also had come back to life, and was "kneeing" him with characteristic enthusiasm.

"Mr. Referee," screamed the gentle educator, when he had been pulled away by Roberts, aided by a

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corporal's squad; " Mr. Referee, he crawled after you blew the whistle! Put that ball back, you scalawag. Our ball! "

Then he fainted, which, considering the day's work, was about the proper thing to do.

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III

HER READING

OUT over Mariveles the sun had set in sombre splendour. A velvet pall of darkness had fallen upon the earth like a conclusion; but the waters of the bay still glowed, glowed with a light that was not reflected, but floated up from within—a luminous exhalation, as it were, from the mysterious depths—a dark purplish light that should not have been, which astonished the soul and was sinister. Someone on the veranda mentioned Morton. The short, idle sentence split the peace of the moment like an electric spark. And the silence that immediately engulfed it was not as the silence that had been before; it was a silence full of unrest, of vague spiritual heavings and stirrings, of tumult invisible, unheard, impalpable and yet felt, poignantly felt, in some immaterial way, as is felt at sea the surge of waters through the impenetrability of the mists. It was such a silence as always followed the invocation of the man; for his case was one which filled us with inward clamour and questioning, and yet pinned us beneath the weight of some indefinable oppression.

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But Courtland began to speak, and we leaned forward, intent, knowing that he must understand. Yet his first words were a confession of doubt, of that same inability to pierce the depths of the thing and pass sentence which exasperated us all vaguely.

"I don't know if I understand—yet," he began, slowly. "I've stared and stared at it—and yet—I don't know. Sometimes I think I understand—a little more every day—and yet——"

His voice had droned off gradually. A heavy torpor descended from the low sky. Far out lights flared up, red, dishevelled lights that bounded and leaped, up and down, to and fro, in frenzied dance. The Tagal fishermen were calling the fish with their alluring flames; the soft, insistent tapping of their paddles upon the flanks of their canoes came to our ears like hypnotic suggestion. They began to shout, a mad medley of yells that wavered, broke, began again and at last welded in one long, quavering cry full of incomprehensible desolation.

And Courtland's voice bassed forth again, with unexpected steadiness.

"It isn't the fall of him that's difficult; that's easy, too easy—we see so much of it. But the redemption —unless we go back to the old explanation, puerile to us complicated moderns, perhaps from its very obviousness—the old theory of purification through

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suffering. But you know, there 're the others, that suffered, too; and they——. And then there is She. She is the mystery, the holy mystery. Before her she had his soul, legible to her like a book. And the leaves wear a smear of mud and blood. And yet what did she read? Out of these defiled pages, what fact did she grasp as the All-Important?"

We listened, patiently waiting, waiting for the word, the solution.

"You remember him—a tall, dark, aquiline man, with something Indian in his features, and efficiency written in every muscle-play of his magnificent body. A strong man, you would remark at first sight, a strong man, physically and morally. Bah!—the strength of man—a phrase, words, bubble! He had the body, the jaw, the presence—a mere shell. The weakness was there, anyhow, some little spot of blight within, I don't know just what; it might have been a touch of the romantic merely—that glowed sometimes in the liquidity of his brown eyes.

"He was one of life's fortunates, too. Belonged to a good family in the States—New Englanders, reputable and cold and narrow, stiff with rectitude as their own rock-ribbed coasts. Well educated, had gone to college, had played football, et cetera. Well, he came over here with the Volunteers. Easy to read after that. First, fervent, romantic patriotism, then

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mad exasperation, then mere cold cynical brutality. Two years of loosening of fiber in the promiscuity of camp, of reversion to type in butchery of field. When the Volunteers returned, he did not go with them. The tropics had him by that time, had penetrated his heart with their pernicious charm—the charm of their languorous amorality, the charm of power:—we whites here, as in some insane asylums, we're all kings. He stayed.

"He went into the Constabulary, behaved rather well there, too. When I first saw him he had just returned from an expedition and his name was in all mouths. His command had proved faithless, and he had fought his way back, through enemy and friend, through incredible suffering. It was fine—but it was the shell. Inside was the spot of blight. And it began to spread, by imperceptible degrees. You could hardly see the progress, you know—only by taking periods far apart, and then it hit you with a shock. Finally he was at the last step—you know the step I mean, the last one.

"You could tell it by an exaggeration of outer form, of outer cleanliness, by a stiffening, as it were, of the shell. The whiteness of his suits became extraordinary; they glistened with starch; they buttoned up to the ears. He flourished his swagger stick like a general; at the club he bore himself with ag-

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gressive stiffness, with a febrile hauteur that challenged the world.

"I suppose it wasn't all corrosion of moral fiber. Perhaps that deplorable touch of romance in the man was partly responsible. You know—love, free, untrammelled love, in the tropics, beneath the palms; between the cynical, blasé, complicated man of civilisation and the maid, the charming, ingenuous maiden, half savage, half child—a miserable hodge-podge vision of love, spices, bananas, bamboos, coral reefs——

"I stumbled upon the establishment by chance. It was cholera time; I had been detailed as inspector. It was very sordid, really. No hut beneath the palms; two rooms in the Walled City. Disorder, untidiness, moral lassitude there. No wonder he stiffened up outside. And she was not even pretty. Her eyes, slightly oblique, were closely set together, which gave her an extraordinary calculating air. While he romanced—I suppose that he did; I hope that he did—she seemed counting, ceaselessly counting the Mex. that might come to her out of that affair. The only redeeming thing that I saw—redeeming, I mean, from a purely plastic standpoint—was a beautiful, liquid-eyed child they had there—her sister. You catch my distinction. It wasn't at all redeeming from another

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point of view—that child there in the shame of their lives. Everything else might have been pardonable—but that——

"After a while even the outer shell began to show it. His white suits lost their impeccability; often he left the upper button open. Sometimes he wore his khaki without leggings. He didn't shave often enough. A vague sordidness began to creep over him like mould.

"He drank. Not steadily; but about once a week he marched into the club with his hostile swagger (mind you, the swagger was all against himself; nobody knew of his situation; he did not know that I knew); he sat down resolutely at one of the tables and called for drink after drink, which he swallowed with the same strange, decided, inflexible manner, as if he were doing something of absolute importance, something that he must do in spite of the world, in spite of himself. He kept that up, a frown between his eyes as if from tremendous mental effort, hour after hour, sometimes till the whiteness of dawn. Then he rose suddenly, clicked his heels together, and stalked off, seemingly unaffected.

"One evening, as he came in thus, I was sitting alone on the veranda. He gave me a casual glance, walked straight on a few steps, then, swerving sud-

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denly, settled in the seat next to mine. He said nothing at first, just sat there, a black bar between his eyes, seizing glass after glass which the muchachos, by that time well trained, ran up to him. Then he began to speak.

"He spoke about Her! Of course, at that time I did not know of her existence. I was bewildered; I thought he spoke of the other one, the one in the Walled City. Then as I understood, I was shocked as by a desecration.

"'It's four years ago, Courtland, that I told her good-by,' he said, soberly, leaning over and placing a hand upon my knee. 'She was in the garden, in the dew of the morning, and she was picking roses.'

"He was silent a long time. I was dumb, astounded; a sense of sacrilege filled my being. He began again:

"'Her eyes are green, Courtland, green like the sea. And she can read into my soul, Courtland, right into my soul!'

"Another period of silence, and then:

"'"I am yours; whenever you need me I shall come to you." That is what she said.'

"He jerked forward over the table, his head in his hands. A horrible spiritual discomfort crept into me. I didn't want to hear about it; I didn't! I wanted to

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hush him, push my hand against that blasphemous mouth——

"'And I left her in the garden, in the dew of the morning, among the roses!'

"He rose stiffly, drew his hands from his face, down to his sides, as if with great effort, squared his shoulders, snapped his heels together, and marched off as he had come in.

"Thus I first saw her, and always after saw her, in indelible picture—a frail young girl, of eyes with the sea-glint in them, picking roses in the dewy morning. Roses!—thousands of them—red and white and yellow; they are at her feet, at her sides, above her; their petals are in her hair, their incense is about her like an adoration.

"I saw him off and on after that, but he never mentioned her again—for which I was thankful. The disintegration was going on. Those black periods of revolt were less frequent now. Professionally he was still strong, had had the honour of being placed on the Katipunan's blacklist, the honour of carrying proudly, like an iron corselet, an exterior of cold indifference above the inward tension of every moment.

"And then came that night.

"Yes, that's the night, the night of which you all know something. But I know more; he told me every-

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thing, that one time he talked, his lips unsealed in a burst of hysteria.

"He awoke, that night, smothered beneath the black weight of some indefinite discomfort. Instinctively his right hand slipped beneath his pillow and closed upon the Mauser pistol; but when he had lived thus a full minute, his fingers clutched about the stock, his breath convulsive in his throat, he slowly released the weapon with a sigh that was not relief. For it was not from the Katipunan warning that came this vague oppression that through his sleep had wrapped him as in a shroud; it was something deeper, more subtle and more intimate; it was interfibred with his innermost being, and it was torture.

"He fought the haunting thing. It was a terrible night. The heat lay upon him like a catafalque. The enfevering rumour of moat-born gnats clung to the netting surrounding him; from the patio-hall there came the weary cough of a muchacho, stretched in his toil-damp clothes upon the polished floor. Outside, between the conch-shell shutters of the veranda the horizon was luminous with the moon; a beam stole into the steaming darkness of the room. It flashed up the mosquito bar into shimmering vapour; blandly it began a pointing-out of details, the inexorable details of his life's vulgarity. A nausea shook his being; he slipped to the floor and out to the balcony.

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" Beneath the moon Manila was agleam. The whole firmament was liquid with the light; it poured down like luminous rain, slid in cascades over the church domes, the tin roofs, the metallic palms, till the whole earth shimmered back to the skies. In the entire city only one spot gloomed—the old fort, mysterious and pestilential with its black oozing walls, its fever-belting moat; but beyond it, as if in exasperation at this stubborn nonconformity, the brightness broke out again triumphant in the glimmering sheen of the bay.

" But from that serenity he turned, and he looked back, he had to look back. He peered into the room of infamy, peered at the bed, rising black and monumental in the farther depths, at the heaps of clothing here and there in cynical promiscuity, at the pile of greasy cooking utensils upon the stand, at the whole ensemble of disorder, weakness, moral lassitude. Passionlessly the light was sweeping all this, plucking out of the shadow one by one the detestable details. It stole toward the right wall, fell upon a cot, and from it there emerged a white little form that came hesitatingly to him. It was Magdalena, the child, the sister of Maria.

" She had been with them long. But now, suddenly, her presence there, in that atmosphere of sin, struck him with a great shock.

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"'Back,' he whispered; 'back to bed, chiquita; it's time to be sleeping.'

"But she wanted something—a lock of his hair. Maria had one; she wanted one also.

"He remembered that she had asked this before, with childish insistence. He had not given much attention to it. And really, in all probability, it was mere childish whim. But now the thing staggered him, like something monstrous. Who could tell what there was in the mind of that child, with great wonder-eyes open to the shamelessness of his life. He chided her harshly and sent her scampering back to her bed.

"Then, turning his back upon the room, upon all this sordid misery, he looked out upon the waters. And a ship, a white army transport, was coming in. Slowly it glided between the ghostlike silhouettes of vessels at anchor; it turned ponderously; there was a splash of phosphorescence at the bow, a running clang of chain through hawse. He did not know what that craft held for him, ah, no! You know, don't you? He did not; but suddenly his whole spiritual being tugged within him, sprang back the long, solitary path of the ship, back across the moonlit bay, past Corregidor, out into the sea, along the foamy track, back miles in thousands to a harder, cleaner land, to a little California town em-

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bowered in scented hills, and it threw itself at the feet of a girl—the girl he had left among the roses, whose eyes could read into his soul.

"The moon went out behind a cloud. He had slid to the floor and lay there, his head upon his arm. Then—he told me that later—he heard somebody hickup, hickup hard, metallically. After a while he discovered that it was he. He was sobbing. And long in the enfevered darkness there pulsed that strange, hard hickup of the man with the iron hand of woe upon his throat.

"He must have fallen asleep at last; when he awoke again a sense of danger weighed upon his whole body like lead. He was stretched full length, his face downward upon his arms, and although he did not turn his head to see, he knew that it was dark, pitch dark. It seemed to him that a moment ago something cold and steely had touched his temple.

"He lay thus, it seemed to him a long time, motionless, while his heart-pulse rose in crescendo till it almost suffocated him. For to his ears, along the sound-conducting floor, there came a faint, soft rustle of something, somebody crawling. A mad desire to rise, shout, attack, break the silent horror of the moment, thrilled him, but fear laid its cold, paralysing hand upon him, and he could not move.

"Suddenly the spell was broken. A click as of a

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knife falling from the hand of an assassin to the floor shot the blood through his veins as by chemical reaction. With a shout he had sprung to his feet, darted across the room, and seized the Mauser beneath his pillow. He turned his eyes upon the floor and in the center caught sight of a vague, crouching form. A shot rang into his ears, vibrated in pain along each of his nerves, and then he was leaning back against the bed-post, limp and cold, sick with the sense of mistake, mistake hideous and irretrievable.

"He stayed there, against the bedpost, limp and cold, his eyes straining through the darkness at the vague huddle in the centre of the room. He knew that Maria had awakened with a scream, that she had struck a light, that she was bending over the nameless thing, and he felt a strange relief as her broad back hid it from view. But she returned toward him and put her dilated eyes, her brown face, fear-spotted, near his own, and she whispered, hoarsely, 'Magdalena!'

"But this was only confirmation of what his whole being was crying to him, and he was busy listening to something else, listening to the crack of a Mauser pistol tearing through his brain, and then springing out into the silent night, echoing, swelling, thundering in fierce crescendo down the hushed streets, rever-

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berated from wall to wall, rushing, a tidal wave of sound, into every house and nook and crevice, shouting, proclaiming, shrieking with its iron voice the story of his life, of his degradation, till the whole city, ringing from the call, hurled it on and on across the sea into Her ears, the heralding trumpet-call of his dishonour, of his fall, of his degradation.

"But Maria was speaking. 'Hush,' she whispered; 'do not tell. We can hide. Martinez will help us. To-morrow we'll bury her. It's the cholera; the health men will believe you; nobody will look close.'

"Together they went back to the spot. Kneeling low, he gathered the little girl up in his arms. Something fell with a steely clang to the floor. He picked it up; it was a pair of scissors. Something eddied down slowly from her other hand; it was a lock of his own hair. He stood there, with the limp little body in his arms, stupid with the sudden vision of the trap set for him, the trap of retributive Fate, its appalling simplicity of means, its atrocity of result. But he must act. Hurriedly seizing his old, moth-eaten, army overcoat, he began to button it upon himself. Maria was talking again.

"'Hush,' she said; 'do not tell. We can hide. Martinez will help us. We'll bury her to-morrow. It's the cholera. The health men will believe you; and nobody will dare look close.'

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"He stopped, with his hand upon the last brass button, his head bent to one side, listening to the insidious murmur. And he knew that it was true, hellishly true. The great stricken city, hypnotised with its fear, was indifferent to everything else. The whole thing could be hidden, buried, annihilated. Then he saw himself again as he had been earlier in the night, standing in the moonlight of the balcony, peering into the room, into the depths of his degradation. 'No, no, enough, enough!' he snarled. And, seizing the little body with its possible spark of life, he rushed out into the street.

"The dawn was breaking. Bareheaded, barefooted, he raced silently along the endless, narrow streets. He passed long files of white-garbed men—the cigar-makers on the way to the factories; they scattered before him in fear. The naked muchachos were galloping their ponies to the beach for their morning bath; they circled wide as they came upon him. At a plaza he tried to hail a carromata, but the cochero whipped up his horse in a frenzy of distrust. It was cholera time, and cold egoism ruled the city. He told me of it, that one time. 'I was alone, Courtland, alone, alone. None would near me, none would hear me. They fled, they fled. I was alone, alone with my crime in my arms, with my story in my arms, the story of my life, of my degradation; alone, Court-

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land, with my temptation, my *temptation*, Courtland——' A vacuum formed about him as he raced on, cutting his feet upon the stones, panting with the physical effort and the spiritual horror, on and on through narrow streets long as death. He came to a quay, a silent, dark place in the shadow of the city wall, and there his temptation slowed him up. Maria was right. It was cholera time; the great amoral city was indifferent to everything else. The little body with its possible spark of life—this infinitesimal possibility which demanded of him such stupendous self-immolation—could be dropped quietly into the river, to stream out there into the unfathomable secret of the bay. And She would never know, She would never know!

"She! He saw her as he had left her, in the garden, in the dewy morning. Her eyes were steadily upon him. 'Enough! Enough!' he cried, with a growl, as that of a wild beast.

"He passed along a crooked bridge. At the end a big Metropolitan policeman stepped to him with a question, but he rushed past with a vague muttering. The policeman hesitated a moment, then followed; and behind the patter of the bare feet the heavy boots echoed, pounding in patient pursuit. At last he stood beneath the pale, sputtering light of the hospital porch, striking feverishly at the great doors.

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They opened before him and he entered, the policeman at his heels. A man took his burden quickly as he sank on the bench, and disappeared through a small door at the end of the hall. A gong clanged twice in quick succession, then once more, and as if in answer two white-jacketed men came down the stairs, passed across the hall, and vanished into the room where the first man had gone. A silence fell over the place. The big clock against the staircase ticked resoundingly. The policeman leaned back against the wall and examined the man huddled there upon the bench with curious glance.

"After a time long as eternity, one of the white-jacketed men came out into the hall and stood in front of Morton. Morton looked up at him in a great question, but the man did not seem to see it.

"'Er, er,' he drawled, as if embarrassed. Then suddenly, 'Who shot her?'

"'I did,' answered Morton.

"'Er, er—with what?'

"'Mauser—pistol—thirty-eight.'

"'Yes, yes,' acquiesced the man. 'And how old did you say she was?'

"'For Christ's sake,' broke out Morton, in sudden cry; 'how is she; is she dead; is there any hope?'

"'Why, yes; of course, she is dead,' answered the man, as if shocked that there should be any doubt

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about it. Then he turned to the policeman, as if saying, 'I've done my part; the rest belongs to you.'

"But Morton had risen, stiffened with the vision of what there was left for him to do.

"'I'm Morton,' he said to the policeman; 'second-class Inspector, Luzon Constabulary. I did the shooting. It was a mistake. I'm going to my room to dress; then I'll report to my chief; and after that I'll surrender myself to the Metropolitan Police. You can follow if you wish.'

"The policeman hesitated a moment, subjugated by the man's manner. 'It's all right,' he said; 'you can go; I'll telephone to headquarters.'

"And as Morton went out he saw the policeman step to the telephone-box at the end of the hall. And he knew that with the puerile, nasal voice of the wire the heralding had begun.

"Outside, the sun was already pouring its bitterness upon the gleaming city, and the streets were fermenting with feverish humanity—white-garbed men, hurrying to the factories, bright-camisaed women going to the market with baskets upon their heads, naked-busted cargadores with gleaming muscles. Morton plunged ahead through the throng, which broke before him with sullen acquiescence to the right of the strong. The exaltation of the night had given place to a strange stupor. His head wab-

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bled on his shoulders, empty as a sleighbell, and a great weariness was in his limbs. Slowly he retraced the long course of the night through the indifferent crowds. He met only one white man that he knew, in a narrow, disreputable alley. The man stopped him, astonished.

"'What are you doing in a place like this?' he asked. 'You forget you're on the Katipunan. You're liable to get hurt.'

"'Hurt?' Morton laughed in his face and left him standing there bewildered. At last he entered the patio of his house. Everything was as usual. The cocheros were washing down their carromatas preparatory to going out; the muchachos were galloping back, their ponies' flanks gleaming with salt water. No one gave him a glance as he went upstairs to his room.

"He entered it without a tremor and looked stupidly about him. The place reeked with the sordid disorder of every morning; of the sudden horror of the night there was only one sign—a blanket had been thrown carelessly over a certain spot in the centre of the room. He turned to his clothes-chest and began to dress. He worked slowly, losing time on unimportant details. It took him a long time to choose the white suit that he would wear amid the dozen that he spread on the bed, and then he was still

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longer putting in the buttons. When he was dressed he noticed that he had to shave, and called for his boy. The boy did not come, and then he saw that several familiar objects were missing from the room. He opened Maria's drawer; it was empty. She had gone, and probably taken the boy with her. He lit the coal-oil stove upon the cooking-stand, heated water, and shaved. Finally he was ready. He went downstairs, jumped into a carromata that was just rattling out of the court, and drove to the Intendencia.

"The Chief let him into his inner office immediately. Looking down upon his superior seated at his desk, Morton told the night's story in dry, monotonous manner, as a story told already a hundred times, and he noticed, as he talked, that the Chief knew already all about it, but was too polite to interrupt. When he had done, the Chief spoke.

"'Yes,' he said; 'it's too bad, too bad. But you must brace up, take it like a man. We all live differently here than we would at home, and things like that are liable to happen. Yes, it's too bad. You must brace up.'

"He stopped, then went on again. 'It's too bad, too bad. I suppose—er—that you are going to surrender yourself to the Metropolitan. Mere matter of form, of course——'

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"'Yes,' said Morton, wearily. He turned to go. The Chief was speaking again.

"'By the way,' he was saying, his eyes close together in a perplexed frown; 'somebody has been here for you this morning, several times, yes, several times. I—you——'

"But Morton, after standing politely a moment without hearing, had gone out, leaving the Chief frowning perplexedly at his desk. He went through the corridor, into the outer office, and then——

"I was there. That part he did not tell me. I came in behind him (I was following him with I don't know what notion of comfort). I saw him stop suddenly. A woman stood before him.

"It was She. I knew her right away, the pale, sweet girl, the girl of the roses. She was standing before him; and her eyes, the eyes with the sea-glint in them, were plunging into his soul. He did not shrink; he stood there before her, his eyes in hers, his shoulders thrown back, his arms hanging limp down his sides, with palms turned outward in a gesture of utter surrender. Long, gravely she read the soul laid bare before her. Suddenly she started back, one, two steps, heavy, falling steps; as at the same higher command he also backed, one, two steps, heavy, falling steps. His head dropped to his chest, his eyes closed. I panted.

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"With an imperceptible movement she glided forward again. His eyes opened. She laid her right hand upon his shoulder.

"'You have suffered,' she said.

"And there you are!"

The darkness had deepened; Courtland was invisible; but we could picture the gesture—a wide sweep of the arm outward, ending in a discouraged droop. "I've explained nothing, pointed out nothing, merely retold it to you as I repeat and repeat it to myself, merely to have at which to stare and stare. And it always ends in this: I see her again, always; I see her glide to him, note the sweet gravity of her gesture, the tremulous profundity of her glance. I hear that phrase, that holy, incomprehensible phrase. And I wonder, I wonder, that's all; and an awe seizes me, bends me down low, as if before something big, terrible, and infinitely sacred."

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IV

THE STRUGGLES AND TRIUMPH OF ISIDRO DE LOS MAESTROS

I—FACE TO FACE WITH THE FOE

RETURNING to his own town, after a morning spent in "working up" the attendance of one of his far and recalcitrant barrio-schools, the Maestro of Balangilang was swaying with relaxed muscle and half-closed eyes to the allegretto trot of his little native pony, when he pulled up with a start, wide awake and all his senses on the alert. Through his somnolence, at first in a low hum, but fast rising in a fiendish crescendo, there had come a buzzing sound, much like that of one of the sawmills of his California forests, and now, as he sat in the saddle, erect and tense, the thing ripped the air in ragged tear, shrieked vibrating into his ear, and finished its course along his spine in delicious irritation.

"Oh, where am I?" murmured the Maestro, blinking; but between blinks he caught the flashing green of the palay fields and knew that he was far from the sawmills of the Golden State. So he raised his nose

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to heaven, and there, afloat above him in the serene blue, was the explanation. It was a kite, a great locust-shaped kite, darting and swooping in the hot monsoon, and from it, dropping plumb, came the abominable clamour.

"Aha!" exclaimed the Maestro, pointing accusingly at the thin line vaguely visible against the skyline in a diagonal running from the kite above him to a point ahead in the road. "Aha! there's something at the end of that; there's Attendance at the end of that!"

With which significant remark he leaned forward in the saddle, bringing his switch down with a whizz behind him. The pony gave three rabbit leaps and then settled down to his drumming little trot. As they advanced, the line overhead dropped gradually. Finally the Maestro had to swerve the horse aside to save his helmet. He pulled up to a walk, and, a few yards further, came to the spot where string met earth in the expected Attendance.

The Attendance was sitting on the ground, his legs spread before him in an angle of forty-five degrees, each foot arched in a secure grip of a bunch of cogon grass. These legs were bare as far up as they went, and, in fact, no trace of clothing was reached until the eye met the lower fringe of an indescribable undershirt modestly veiling the upper

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half of a rotund little paunch; an indescribable undershirt, truly, for observation could not reach the thing itself, but only the dirt incrusting it so that it hung together, rigid as a knight's iron corselet, in spite of monstrous tears and rents. Between the teeth of the Attendance was a long, thick cheroot, wound about with hemp fiber, at which he pulled with rounded mouth. Hitched around his right wrist was the kite string, and between his legs a stick spindled with an extra hundred yards. At intervals he hauled hand-over-hand upon the taut line, and then the landscape vibrated to the buzz-saw song which had so compellingly recalled the Maestro to his eternal pursuit.

As the shadow of the horse fell upon him, the Attendance brought his eyes down from their heavenly contemplation, and fixed them upon the rider. A tremor of dismay, mastered as soon as born, flitted over him; then, silently, with careful suppression of all signs of haste, he reached for a big stone with his little yellow paw, then for a stick lying farther off. Using the stone as a hammer, he drove the stick into the ground with deliberate stroke, wound the string around it with tender solicitude, and then, everything being secure, just as the Maestro was beginning his usual embarrassing question:

"Why are you not at school, eh?"

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He drew up his feet beneath him, straightened up like a jack-in-the-box, took a hop-skip-jump, and, with a flourish of golden heels, flopped head first into the roadside ditch's rank luxuriance.

"The little devil!" exclaimed the disconcerted Maestro. He dismounted and, leading his horse, walked up to the side of the ditch. It was full of the water of the last baguio. From the edge of the cane-field on the other side there cascaded down the bank a mad vegetation; it carpeted the sides and arched itself above in a vault. Within this natural harbour a carabao was soaking blissfully. Only its head emerged, flat with the water, the great horns wreathed incongruously with the floating lilies, the thick nostrils exhaling ecstasy in shuddering riplets.

Filled with a vague sense of the ridiculous, the Maestro peered into the recess. "The little devil!" he murmured: "He's somewhere in here; but how am I to get him, I'd like to know? Do you see him, eh, Mathusalem?" he asked of the stolid beast.

Whether in answer to this challenge or to some other irritant, the animal slowly opened one eye and ponderously let it fall shut again in what, to the heated imagination of the Maestro, seemed a patronising wink. Its head slid quietly along the water; puffs of ooze rose from below and spread on the

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surface. Then, in the silence, there rose a significant sound—a soft, repeated snapping of the tongue:

"Cluck, cluck."

"Aha!" shouted the Maestro, triumphantly, to his invisible audience. "I know where you are, you scamp; right behind the carabao; come out of there, *pronto, dale-dale!*"

But his enthusiasm was of short duration. To the commanding tongue-click the carabao had stopped dead-still and a silence heavy with defiance met the too-soon exultant cries. An insect in the foliage began a creaking call, and then all the creatures of humidity hidden there among this fermenting vegetation joined in mocking chorus.

The Maestro felt a vague blush welling up from the innermost recesses of his being.

"I'm going to get that kid," he muttered, darkly, "if I have to wait till—the coming of Common Sense to the Manila office! By gum, he's the Struggle for Attendance personified!"

He sat down on the bank and waited. This did not prove interesting. The animals of the ditch creaked on; the carabao bubbled up the water with his deep content; above, the abandoned kite went through strange acrobatics and wailed as if in pain. The Maestro dipped his hand into the water; it was luke-

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warm. "No hope of a freeze out," he murmured, pensively.

Behind, the pony began to pull at the reins.

"Yes, little horse, I'm tired, too. Well," he said, apologetically, "I hate to get energetic, but there are circumstances which——"

The end of his sentence was lost, for he had whisked out the big Colt, dissuader of ladrones, that hung on his belt, and was firing. The six shots went off like a bunch of firecrackers, but far from at random, for a regular circle boiled up around the dozing carabao. The disturbed animal snorted, and again a discreet "cluck-cluck" rose in the sudden, astounded silence.

"This," said the Maestro, as he calmly introduced fresh cartridges into the chambers of his smoking weapon, "is what might be called an application of Western solutions to Eastern difficulties."

Again he brought his revolver down, but he raised it without shooting and replaced it in its holster. From beneath the carabao's rotund belly, below the surface, an indistinct form shot out; cleaving the water like a polliwog, it glided for the bank, and then a black, round head emerged at the feet of the Maestro.

"All right, bub; we'll go to school now," said the latter, nodding to the dripping figure as it rose before him.

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He lifted the sullen brownie and straddled him forward of the saddle, then proceeded to mount himself, when the Capture began to display marked agitation. He squirmed and twisted, turned his head back and up, and finally a grunt escaped him.

"El velador."

"The kite, to be sure; we mustn't forget the kite," acquiesced the Maestro, graciously. He pulled up the anchoring stick and laboriously, beneath the hostilely critical eye of the Capture, he hauled in the line till the screeching, resisting flying-machine was brought to earth. Then he vaulted into the saddle.

The double weight was a little too much for the pony; so it was at a dignified walk that the Maestro, his naked, dripping, muddy and still defiant prisoner a-straddle in front of him, the captured kite passed over his left arm like a knightly shield, made his triumphal entry into the pueblo.

II—HEROISM AND REVERSES

When Maestro Pablo rode down Rizal-y-Washington Street to the schoolhouse with his oozing, dripping prize between his arms, the kite like a knightly escutcheon against his left side, he found that in spite of his efforts at preserving a modest, self-deprecatory bearing, his spine would stiffen and his

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nose point upward in the unconscious manifestations of an internal feeling that there was in his attitude something picturesquely heroic. Not since walking down the California campus one morning after the big game, won three minutes before the blowing of the final whistle by his fifty-yard run-in of a punt, had he been in that posture—at once pleasant and difficult—in which one's vital concern is to wear a humility sufficiently convincing to obtain from friends forgiveness for the crime of being great.

A series of incidents immediately following, however, made the thing quite easy.

Upon bringing the new recruit into the schoolhouse, to the perfidiously expressed delight of the already incorporated, the Maestro called his native assistant to obtain the information necessary to a full matriculation. At the first question the inquisition came to a deadlock. The boy did not know his name.

"In Spanish times," the Assistant suggested, modestly, "we called them 'de los Reyes' when the father was of the army, and 'de la Cruz' when the father was of the church; but now, we can never know *what* it is."

The Maestro dashed to a solution. "All right," he said, cheerily. "I caught him; guess I can give him a name. Call him—Isidro de los Maestros."

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And thus it was that the urchin went down on the school records, and on the records of life afterward.

Now well pleased with himself, the Maestro, as is the wont of men in such state, sought for further enjoyment.

"Ask him," he said, teasingly, pointing with his chin at the newly-baptised but still unregenerate little savage, "why he came out of the ditch."

"He says he was afraid that you would steal the kite," answered the Assistant, after some linguistic sparring.

"Eh?" ejaculated the surprised Maestro.

And in his mind there framed a picture of himself riding along the road with a string between his fingers; and, following in the upper layers of air, a buzzing kite; and, down in the dust of the highway, an urchin trudging wistfully after the kite, drawn on irresistibly, in spite of his better judgment, on and on, horrified but fascinated, up to the yawning school-door.

It would have been the better way. "I ought to go and soak my head," murmured the Maestro, pensively.

This was check number one, but others came in quick succession.

For, the morning after this incident, the Maestro did not find Isidro among the weird, wild crowd gath-

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ered into the annex (a transformed sugar storehouse) by the last raid of the Municipal Police.

Neither was Isidro there the next day, nor the next. And it was not till a week had passed that the Maestro discovered, with an inward blush of shame, that his much-longed-for pupil was living in the little hut behind his own house. There would have been nothing shameful in the overlooking—there were seventeen other persons sharing the same abode—were it not that the nipa front of this human hive had been blown away by the last baguio, leaving an unobstructed view of the interior, if it might be called such. As it was, the Municipal Police was mobilised at the urgent behest of the Maestro. Its "cabo," flanked by two privates armed with old German needle-guns, besieged the home and, after an interesting game of hide-and-go-seek, Isidro was finally caught by one arm and one ear, and ceremoniously marched to school. And there the Maestro asked him why he had not been attending.

"No hay pantalones," (there are no pants), Isidro answered, dropping his eyes modestly to the ground.

This was check number two, and unmistakably so, for was it not a fact that a civil commission, overzealous in its civilising ardour, had passed a law commanding that everyone should wear, when in public, "at least one garment, preferably trousers"?

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Following this, and an unsuccessful plea to the town tailor, who was on a three weeks' vacation on account of the death of a fourth cousin, the Maestro shut himself up a whole day with Isidro in his little nipa house; and behind the closely-shut shutters engaged in some mysterious toil. When they emerged again the next morning, Isidro wended his way to the school at the end of the Maestro's arm, trousered!

The trousers, it must be said, had a certain cachet of distinction. They were made of calico-print, with a design of little black skulls sprinkled over a yellow background. Some parts hung flat and limp as if upon a scarecrow; others pulsed like a fire-hose in action with the pressure of flesh compressed beneath, while at other points they bulged pneumatically in little footballs. The right leg dropped to the ankle; the left stopped, discouraged, a few inches below the knee. The seams looked like the putty mountain-chains of the geography class. As the Maestro strode along he threw rapid glances at his handiwork, and it was plain that the emotions that moved him were somewhat mixed in character. His face showed traces of a puzzled diffidence, as that of a man who has come in a sack-coat to a full-dress affair; but after all it was satisfaction that predominated, for after this heroic effort he had decided that Victory had at last perched upon his banners.

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And it really looked so for a time. Isidro stayed at school at least during that first day of his trousered life. For when the Maestro, later in the forenoon, paid a visit to the Annex, he found the Assistant in charge standing disconcerted before the urchin who, with eyes indignant and hair perpendicular upon the top of his head, was evidently holding to his side of the argument with his customary energy.

Isidro was trouserless. Sitting rigid upon his bench, holding on with both hands as if in fear of being removed, he dangled naked legs to the sight of who might look.

"Que barbaridad!" murmured the Assistant, in limp dejection.

But Isidro threw at him a look of black hatred. This became a tense, silent plea for justice as it moved up for a moment to the Maestro's face, and then it settled back upon its first object in frigid accusation.

"Where are your trousers, Isidro?" asked the Maestro.

Isidro relaxed his convulsive grasp of the bench with one hand, canted himself slightly to one side, just long enough to give an instantaneous view of the trousers, neatly folded and spread between what he was sitting with and what he was sitting on, then swung back with the suddenness of a kodak shutter,

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seized his seat with new determination, and looked eloquent justification at the Maestro.

"Why will you not wear them?" asked the latter.

"He says he will not get them dirty," said the Assistant, interpreting the answer.

"Tell him when they are dirty he can go down to the river and wash them," said the Maestro.

Isidro pondered over the suggestion for two silent minutes. The prospect of a day spent splashing in the lukewarm waters of the Ilog he finally put down as not at all detestable, and, getting up to his feet:

"I will put them on," he said, gravely.

Which he did on the moment, with an absence of hesitation as to which was front and which was back, very flattering to the Maestro.

That Isidro persevered during the next week, the Maestro also came to know. For now, regularly every evening, as he smoked and lounged upon his long, cane chair, trying to persuade his tired body against all laws of physics to give up a little of its heat to a circumambient atmosphere of temperature equally enthusiastic; as he watched among the rafters of the roof the snakes swallowing the rats, the rats devouring the lizards, the lizards snapping up the spiders, the spiders snaring the flies in eloquent representation of the life struggle, his studied passiveness would be

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broken by strange sounds from the dilapidated hut at the back of his house. A voice imitative of that of the Third Assistant who taught the annex, hurled forth questions which were immediately answered by another voice, curiously like that of Isidro.

Fiercely: "Du yu ssee dde hhett?"

Breathlessly: "Yiss I ssee dde hhett."

Ferociously: "Show me dde hhett."

Eagerly: "Here are dde hhett."

Thunderously: "Gif me dde hhett."

Exultantly: "I gif yu dde hhett."

Then the Maestro would step to the window and look into the hut from which came this Socratic dialogue. And on this wall-less platform, which looked much like a primitive stage, a singular action was unrolling itself in the smoky glimmer of a two-cent lamp. The Third Assistant was not there at all; but Isidro was the Third Assistant. And the pupil was not Isidro, but the witless old man who was one of the many sharers of the abode. In the voice of the Third Assistant, Isidro was hurling out the tremendous questions; and, as the old gentleman who represented Isidro opened his mouth only to drule betel-juice, it was Isidro who, in Isidro's voice, answered the questions. In his rôle as Third Assistant he stood with legs akimbo before the pupil, a bamboo twig in his hand; as Isidro the pupil, he plumped down quickly

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upon the bench before responding. The sole function of the senile old man seemed that of representing the pupil while the question was being asked and receiving, in that capacity, a sharp cut across the nose from Isidro-the-Third-Assistant's switch, at which he chuckled to himself in silent and liquid joy.

For several nights this performance went on with gradual increase of vocabulary in teacher and pupil. But when it had reached the "Do you see the apple-tree?" stage, it ceased to advance, marked time for a while, and then slowly but steadily began sliding back into primitive beginnings. This engendered in the Maestro a suspicion which became certainty when Isidro entered the schoolhouse, one morning just before recess, between two policemen at port arms. A rapid scrutiny of the rollbook showed that he had been absent a whole week.

"I was at the river cleaning my trousers," answered Isidro, when put face to face with this curious fact.

The Maestro suggested that the precious pantaloons, which, by the way, had been mysteriously embellished by a red stripe down the right leg and a green stripe down the left leg, could be cleaned in less than a week, and that Saturday and Sunday were days specially set aside in the Catechismo of the Americanos for such little family duties.

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Isidro understood; and the nightly rehearsals soon reached the stage of:

"How menny hhetts hev yu?"

"I hev *ten* hhetts."

Then came another arrest of development, and another decline, at the end of which Isidro, again making his appearance flanked by two German needle-guns, caused a blush of remorse to suffuse the Maestro by explaining with frigid gravity that his mother had given birth to a little pickaninny brother and that, of course, he had had to help.

But significant events in the family did not stop there. After birth, death stepped in for its due. Isidro's relatives began to drop off in rapid sequence —each demise demanding three days of meditation in retirement—till at last the Maestro, who had had the excellent idea of keeping upon paper a record of these unfortunate occurrences, was looking with stupor upon a list showing that Isidro had lost, within three weeks, two aunts, three grandfathers, and five grandmothers—which, considering that an actual count proved the house of bereavement still able to boast of seventeen occupants, was plainly an exaggeration.

Following a long sermon from the Maestro, in which he sought to explain to Isidro that he must always tell the truth for sundry philosophical reasons

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—a statement which the First Assistant tactfully smoothed to something within range of credulity by translating it that one must not lie to Americanos, because Americanos do not like it—there came a period of serenity.

III—THE TRIUMPH

There came to the Maestro days of peace and joy. Isidro was coming to school; Isidro was learning English. Isidro was steady, Isidro was docile, Isidro was positively so angelic that there was something uncanny about the situation. And with Isidro, other little savages were being pruned into the school-going stage of civilisation. Helped by the police, they were pouring in from barrio and hacienda; the attendance was going up by leaps and bounds, till at last a circulative report showed that Balangilang had passed the odious Cabancalam with its less strenuous schoolman, and left it in the ruck by a full hundred. The Maestro was triumphant; his chest had gained two inches in expansion. When he met Isidro at recess, playing cibay, he murmured softly: "You little devil; you were Attendance personified, and I've got you now." At which Isidro, pausing in the act of throwing a shell with the top of his head at another shell on the ground, looked up beneath long lashes in a smile absolutely seraphic.

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In the evening the Maestro, his heart sweet with content, stood at the window. These were moonlight nights; in the grassy lanes the young girls played graceful Spanish games, winding like garlands to a gentle song; from the shadows of the huts came the tinkle-tinkle of serenading guitars and yearning notes of violins wailing despairing love. And Isidro, seated on the bamboo ladder of his house, went through an independent performance. He sang "Good-night, Ladies," the last song given to the school, sang it in soft falsetto, with languorous drawls, and never-ending organ points, over and over again, till it changed character gradually, dropped into a wailing minor, an endless croon full of the obscure melancholy of a race that dies.

"Goo-oo-oo nigh-igh-igh loidies-ies-ies; goo-oo-oo nigh-igh-igh loidies-ies-ies; goo-oo-oo-oo nigh-igh-igh loidies-ies-ies-ies," he repeated and repeated, over and over again, till the Maestro's soul tumbled down and down abysses of maudlin tenderness, and Isidro's chin fell upon his chest in a last drawling, sleepy note. At which he shook himself together and began the next exercise, a recitation, all of one piece from first to last syllable, in one high, monotonous note, like a mechanical doll saying "papa-mamma."

"Oh-look-et-de-moon -she-ees-shinin -up-theyre-oh-mudder-she -look-like-a-lom-in-de -ayre-lost-night-she-

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was -smalleyre -on-joos-like-a -bow-boot-now -she-ees-biggerr-on-rrraon-like-an-O."

Then a big gulp of air, and again:

"Oh-look -et -de -moon -she -ees -shinin -up -theyre, etc.——"

An hour of this, and he skipped from the lyric to the patriotic, and then it was:

"I-loof-dde-name-off-Wash-ing-ton,
I-loof-my-coontrrree-tow,
I-loof-dde-fleg-dde-dear-owl-fleg,
Off-rrid-on-whit-on-bloo-oo-oo!"

By this time the Maestro was ready to go to bed, and long in the torpor of the tropic night there came to him, above the hum of the mosquitoes fighting at the net, the soft, wailing croon of Isidro, back at his "Goo-oo-oo nigh-igh-igh loidies-ies-ies."

These were days of ease and beauty to the Maestro, and he enjoyed them the more when a new problem came to give action to his resourceful brain.

The thing was: For three days there had not been one funeral in Balangilang.

In other climes, in other towns, this might have been a source of congratulation, perhaps, but not in Balangilang. There were rumours of cholera in the towns to the north, and the Maestro, as President of

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the Board of Health, was on the watch for it. Five deaths a day, experience had taught him, was the healthy average for the town; and this sudden cessation of public burials—he could not believe that dying had stopped—was something to make him suspicious.

It was over this puzzling situation that he was pondering at the morning recess, when his attention was taken from it by a singular scene.

The "batas" of the school were flocking and pushing and jolting at the door of the basement, which served as stable for the municipal carabao. Elbowing his way to the spot, the Maestro found Isidro at the entrance, gravely taking up an admission of five shells from those who would enter. Business seemed to be brisk; Isidro had already a big bandana handkerchief bulging with the receipts, which were now overflowing into a great tao hat, obligingly loaned him by one of his admirers, as one by one those lucky enough to have the price filed in, feverish curiosity upon their faces.

The Maestro thought it might be well to go in also, which he did without paying admission. The disappointed gatekeeper followed him. The Maestro found himself before a little pink-and-blue tissue-paper box, frilled with rosettes.

"What have you in there?" asked the Maestro.

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"My brother," answered Isidro, sweetly.

He cast his eyes to the ground and watched his big toe drawing vague figures in the earth, then, appealing to the First Assistant, who was present by this time, he added, in the tone of virtue which *will* be modest:

"Maestro Pablo does not like it when I do not come to school on account of a funeral, so I brought him [pointing to the little box] with me."

"Well, I'll be——," was the only comment the Maestro found adequate at the moment.

"It is my little pickaninny brother," went on Isidro, becoming alive to the fact that he was a centre of interest; "and he died last night of the great sickness."

"The great what?" ejaculated the Maestro, who had caught a few words.

"The great sickness," explained the Assistant. "That is the name by which these ignorant people call the cholera."

For the next two hours the Maestro was very busy.

Firstly he gathered the "batas" who had been rich enough to attend Isidro's little show and locked them up—with the impresario himself—in the little town jail close by. Then, after a vivid exhortation upon the beauties of boiling water and reporting disease, he dismissed the school for an indefinite period.

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After which, impressing the two town prisoners, now temporarily out of home, he shouldered Isidro's pretty box, tramped to the cemetery, and directed the digging of a grave six feet deep. When the earth had been scraped back upon the lonely little object, he returned to town and transferred the awe-stricken playgoers to his own house, where a strenuous performance took place.

Tolio, his boy, built a most tremendous fire outside and set upon it all the pots and pans and cauldrons and cans of his kitchen arsenal, filled with water. When these began to gurgle and steam, the Maestro set himself to stripping the horrified bunch in his room; one by one he threw the garments out of the window to Tolio, who, catching them, stuffed them into the receptacles, poking down their bulging protest with a big stick. Then the Maestro mixed an awful brew in an old oilcan, and, taking the brush which was commonly used to sleek up his little pony, he dipped it generously into the pungent stuff and began an energetic scrubbing of his now absolutely panic-stricken wards. When he had done this to his satisfaction and thoroughly to their discontent, he let them put on their still steaming garments, and they slid out of the house, aseptic as hospitals.

Isidro he kept longer. He lingered over him with loving and strenuous care, and after he had him

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externally clean proceeded to dose him internally from a little red bottle. Isidro took everything—the terrific scrubbing, the exaggerated dosing, the ruinous treatment of his pantaloons—with wonder-eyed serenity.

When all this was finished, the Maestro took the urchin into the dining-room and, seating him on his best bamboo chair, he courteously offered him a fine, dark perfecto.

The next instant he was suffused with the light of a new revelation. For, stretching out his hard little claw to receive the gift, the boy had shot at him a glance so mild, so wistful, so brown-eyed, filled with such mixed admiration, trust, and appeal, that a a queer softness had risen in the Maestro from somewhere down in the regions of his heel, up and up, quietly, like the mercury in the thermometer, till it had flowed through his whole body and stood still, its high-water mark a little lump in his throat.

"Why, Lord bless us-ones, Isidro," said the Maestro, quietly. "We're only a child, after all, a mere baby, my man. And don't we like to go to school?"

"Señor Pablo," asked the boy, looking up softly into the Maestro's still perspiring visage, "Señor Pablo, is it true that there will be no school because of the great sickness?"

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"Yes, it is true," answered the Maestro. "No school for a long, long time."

Then Isidro's mouth began to twitch queerly, and, suddenly throwing himself full length upon the floor, he hurled out from somewhere within him a long, tremulous wail.

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V

THE FAILURE

OUT of the deadly stupor that encased him as a leaden coffin, Burke started with a gurgling cry. He thought that somebody was driving a red-hot poker into his eyeballs. He found only that the flaming globe of the rising sun had just emerged over the lorcha's bow bulwarks and was burrowing his face with its feverish rays. He rolled clumsily down the sloping deck to a spot where a flap of dirty sail gave shade and there he lay weakly on his back, motionless.

The change gave him little comfort. His eyes throbbed hotly, his throat was as if scraped raw, and his mouth was fevered. A circle of iron seemed riveted around his head and his whole body vibrated to a mad dance of all his nerves. At last he could stand it no longer. He sat up and looked about him desperately, then crawled to the scuppers and picked up a flask lying there. He held it up against the sun. It was empty. With a curse he hurled it into diamond-dust against the bulwarks.

He sat there a moment, glassy-eyed, then rose with

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a trembling effort and groped aft to the cabin. He had to kick a mangy dog out of the way and to step over a squalid baby, but finally he fell on his knees in a corner and eagerly searched beneath the bamboo bench that followed the wall on three sides. He rolled a dirty bundle out of the way and pulled a demijohn toward him. He lowered the mouth tentatively till a few drops of the fiery white beno wet the palm of his hand, then, with a cry between a sob and a snarl, like that of a starving dog closing in on a bone, he raised the jug to his lips and drained the dregs in four big gulps. His trembling fingers opened and the demijohn fell to the floor with a crash.

A faint colour came to his cheeks and his body straightened. He searched his pockets with feverish fingers and drew out a soiled cigarette paper and a pinch of tobacco. He rolled a cigarette, lit it, and went out on the deck. A breath of wind, sweet with the fruity smell of crude sugar, struck him in the face, and he noticed for the first time what had been true since his awakening—that the lorcha had come to a standstill and that the white roofs of Manila were glistening before him.

The sight did not seem to quicken him into action. He strolled down the deck and sat on the bulwarks, his legs dangling above the quay. He inhaled the smoke deeply two or three times, then his back

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humped and his eyes narrowed like those of a purring cat.

This lethargy of bliss did not last long. Slowly something forced itself into it with the insistence of a question mark. On the quay almost beneath his feet, there were four long, black boxes, ranged symmetrically in a row, each with its long, black cover by its side. At first they said nothing to his half-stupid contemplation, but gradually they took on something mysterious and awesome. They were so regular, so oblong, so respectable; they stood so gapingly, so alertly open, that suddenly a little shudder thrilled up along his spine. Ten feet away, rigid and alert, a big Met. policeman stood, looking along the quay with patiently expectant eyes. Burke was on the point of calling out a question when his attention was drawn by another scene.

A little rosy pig trotted squealing down the deck with a fierce little boy after it. It bumped the bulwark beneath Burke, and the vibration caused him to look down. The boy had the pig by the tail. The boy was pulling one way and the pig the other; they were of equal strength, so that for a second they were fixed in a plastic group. Struggling impotently, the boy turned his big black eyes up to the man in mute appeal, and the big black eyes suddenly recalled to Burke two other such eyes in just such a little brown

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face, and these big black eyes became a measure of the road that Burke had travelled the last three years, a road he liked not to contemplate. So he was turning from the unpleasant scene when the boy let go the tail and fell back, rigid.

Burke looked down upon the stark little form with a frown of perplexity and distrust. He slid himself along the bulwark till a few feet away, then ran his eyes up along the mainmast.

At the peak, a yellow flag was smacking in the wind.

His eyes dropped to the boxes on the quay. They were coffins.

He understood. The cholera had crept upon the lorcha before it had left Vigan, and all the way down the coast it had been doing its dread work about him, plunged in the oblivion of his solitary orgy.

There had been seventy people on the lorcha when it had left Vigan; and there were still a half-hundred. They were huddled forward, a squalid, rancid, and coloured group, their eyes wistfully set upon a black pot vibrating upon a fire of small sticks. They were from the famine district of Vigan and had not eaten for a long time, but their attention was not solely upon the vessel holding their handful of rice. At times they threw black looks toward the quay. Fear

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was upon them; fear, not of the impalpable Death hovering about them, but fear of the White Man's Quarantine as represented by the big, passive policeman standing there like a menace; the White Man's Quarantine, ready to clutch them at the first sign of disease and tear them off to its den, to a fearful and ever-mysterious fate.

Burke looked at them, then pointed at the boy at his feet, but they seemed to see nothing. He sprang to the deck and he shouted. They turned their heads, scowled indifferently at the little stretched body, then their eyes returned to the black kettle quivering on the fire.

"Here, here, that won't do," cried Burke, all the maudlin softness out of his face, as he marched upon the group. "Get up, you hound!" he thundered, kicking the nearest man. "Get up, there! And you, too," he added, cuffing another. "Get up and take care of the kid!"

He laid about him furiously for a moment, then his rage oozed out of him and he stood silent and at loss. For the resistance offered him was unlike any he had ever met. The men did not budge; they took the blows like blocks of wood, remaining as they were, without a tremor, their eyes glowing sullenly at the deck between their knees; and the passiveness of that resistance was so monstrously powerful that Burke

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felt his throat tighten in a rageful, childish impulse to break out weeping.

On a box, a little apart from the crowd, there sat a fat, sleek, pale-yellow personage. He observed the scene through his narrow eyes with the arrogantly skeptical air of the Chino mestizo. His falsetto voice now broke the silence.

"Porque no Usted?" he said, suavely, while his eyes narrowed to a line with a gleam in it. "Why not you?"

Burke opened his mouth, left it open for a good second, then shut it again with a grinding of teeth.

"By God, I'll do it," he muttered, as he turned away.

He went to the boy, made a movement as if to pick him up, hesitated, stood irresolute for a moment, then, with a blinding flash of resolution, such as in the past had carried him off into postures of which others said resounding things and of which he himself was vaguely ashamed, he stooped quickly and whisked up the little body into his arms. He crossed the deck, and as he passed his old army blanket, lying still open on the floor, he picked it up and wrapped it about the boy; then he laid the whole burden down in a sheltered spot against the cabin. A sudden, springy alertness had seized his body, and beneath the pussy alcoholic flesh of his face had sprung tight

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ropy lines not yet corroded. He tore off the light camisa and pantaloons and began rubbing the stiffened limbs. He rubbed with an energy almost savage, and he felt under his fingers the stark flesh loosen and warm up and live again. The glazed eyes softened, the lids closed slowly, and they reopened with the light of life beneath them.

And then it was worse. Burke sprang to his feet. His bloated face took on the colour of his khaki jacket and beads of perspiration welled up about his lips. Then his eyebrows snapped down in one black line, and his lower jaw advanced till it almost crushed out the double chin. For the next hour he worked with concentrated rage.

A thunder of wheels over the cobbles of the quay froze him into a listening attitude. The noise stopped in a creaking of brakes, and Burke rose slowly, stretching his body to full length. He walked to the bulwarks and looked out. A big, black wagon was standing by. From it two men alighted, putting on great rubber gloves. Burke came down the gangplank, bearing the boy in his arms. "Hurry up, he may pull through," he said. They placed the little form in the wagon and rumbled off to the heavy trot of the weary horses. The Met. carelessly took a position between Burke and the street, but this was not necessary. Burke looked down at the coffins, raised

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his head, took a big gulp of fresh air, and walked back up the plank.

Ten minutes later a light buggy drove up. An officer with a brass cross on the collar of his khaki jacket sprang out and walked aboard.

Burke went to his feet and his hand rose to his hat in military salute. "Good-morning, sir," he said.

The officer's eyes wandered over the boat, taking in all the details swiftly, then came back to the man standing there at attention. He looked at the bloated face, with its ruins of strength beneath; at the bloodshot eyes, with their remnant of calm, blue light; at the great, corroded body, with its something yet elastic.

"Jerry Burke!" he said.

"Glad you remember me," said the man, with a slight sarcasm in his voice.

The officer looked at him again, with a long, sweeping glance that took in the bloated face, the bloodshot eyes, the twisted mouth, the dirty, ragged collar, the greasy jacket, the trembling, clutching hands, the corkscrewed trousers, the heelless shoes—the whole abject picture of human degradation there before him.

"And that's what you have become," he said, at length.

Jerry did not answer.

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"Why the devil didn't you go home with the Volunteers?" asked the officer, angrily.

Jerry's lips trembled.

"It had got too bad by that time," he answered, at length.

"And now?"

"You can see."

The officer paced the deck.

"Who took care of that boy?" he asked, suddenly, turning upon Jerry with a snarl.

"I did," answered the latter, surprised into acknowledgment.

The officer went back to his pacing. At the tenth turn he stopped short, pivoted on his heel, and faced Burke.

"You were a man once, weren't you?" he asked.

"I suppose so," answered Jerry, hanging his head. "At least, you ought to know," he added, a little bitterly.

"Well, do you want to be a man again?"

Jerry was looking at the deck. He raised his eyes slowly till they plunged into the surgeon's.

"Can you do it?" he asked, steadily. "I can't!"

The officer's manner softened.

"Well, here's the matter. I'm short of Health men. I need somebody on this derelict. You are the man; you're in quarantine, anyway."

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Jerry waited for more.

"This afternoon the lorcha will be towed behind the breakwater. She'll be in strict quarantine. You'll be in charge. I'll give you disinfectants and medicines. You'll keep the boat clean, and you'll attend the sick. Whenever somebody tumbles over, run up the yellow flag and we'll come after him as soon as we can. Every morning I'll come around and see how you are getting along."

"How long will it last?" asked Jerry.

"Don't know. Till they're all gone, perhaps. There must be five days' quarantine after each case. If they die close together, it will be short. If they go five days apart, it may last six months. Six months to make a man of you, Jerry; will you do it?"

"It will be hell," said Jerry, with a tense smile.

"It will be hell," acquiesced the surgeon. "You must work, Jerry."

"I'll do it," said Jerry.

That afternoon the lorcha was towed behind the breakwater, and at sunset a woman who was lighting the fire for the evening meal whirled on her heels and slapped the deck with the whole length of her body. Jerry ran up the yellow flag, but the night had dropped like a thunderbolt, and it was not seen from shore; so he cared for her till morning. She was old

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and knotted and decrepit; her teeth were gone, and she was loathesomely unclean, but he worked over her with rigid patience, not ceasing for a moment, for the Demon was already clutching at him. At dawn a boat pulled up and the woman was lowered into it, still alive.

Then the sun rose, blinding hot, and Jerry paced the deck furiously. The groups of sleepers on deck were disentangling beneath the stinging announcement of the new day, and they scattered in awe before the strange Americano, tugging among them with great steps that were almost leaps. At last a little steamer appeared at the mouth of the river; it slid along on the other side of the breakwater, turned at the end, and chugged alongside the lorcha. It was the doctor's launch.

Burke stepped to the bulwarks and looked down at the boat wallowing in the cross-seas. Huntington was standing on the rail, his right hand against the side of the lorcha, his body giving easily to every shock; and Burke gazed hungry-eyed at his cool, alert demeanour.

"Well, how goes it?" asked the surgeon.

"One case," said Burke, calmly.

"That means five days more. What is it?"

"A woman; she's at the hospital now," he answered, in the same rigid, subdued tone.

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"And you?" asked the surgeon.

"For God's sake," cried Burke, his voice breaking into frenzy, "give me something to do, something to do!"

"All right, old man," answered Huntington, showing no surprise. "Throw us a rope."

Burke threw a rope. A case was tied to it and hauled on deck.

"Chlorodyne," announced the surgeon.

The rope was thrown back. A demijohn was hauled up, then another, and another.

"Carbolic," shouted Huntington. "Disinfect the boat."

"All right; good-by," said Burke.

The doctor waved his hand, and the launch churned away.

The day was heavy with heat. The wind had died, the sea was glazed, and the tin roofs of Manila glistened white. A torpor fell from the brazen heavens, and all day Burke struggled beneath it in a frenzy of toil. When he had cleaned the boat thoroughly, he arranged the little cabin into a hospital. Almost immediately it had its occupant. A boy was down. Jerry laid him on his cot, pried his teeth open with his knife, and poured some chlorodyne between them; then walked to the mainmast, and soon to the watchers on shore the leprous banner rose against the gory

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hues of the setting sun. The boat came and took the child away.

When the launch came, in the morning, Burke was standing at the head of the ladder. All the traces of a fearful night were in his face, and yet Huntington's scrutiny found something satisfactory in the man. The old khaki suit had been washed, and hung, still damp, upon his frame.

More medicines and disinfectants, a supply of food and distilled water, several objects, very vulgar and very grim, were passed up, and then the doctor asked:

"Anything you need, old man?"

Burke shook his head in indecisive negative.

"I have you on the pay-roll," added the officer, casually; "assistant inspector; three-and-a-half a day."

Burke dropped his eyes to the deck. Then he blurted out:

"Yes, two khakis."

"All right," said Huntington, rapidly measuring with his eye the frame before him. "Anything else?"

Again an embarrassed silence, then another burst:

"A razor."

"I'll send the things this afternoon," said Huntington, gladder than his voice implied.

Burke went back to his work. After disinfecting his little hospital he executed, with the aid of Tionko,

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the Chino mestizo, whose oily good will and linguistic ability were fast becoming indispensable, a plot hatched during the sleeplessness of the night. First the men, then the women, were filed into a bath house made of sails and forced to bathe in warm, carbolised water, while their clothes boiled in cauldrons outside. By sunset the passenger list of the *Bonita* was clean, at least externally.

Then the usual commotion forward told Burke that his work had begun again. This time it was a child-mother, a pitiful, little black-eyed thing, with a squalling whitish baby at her breast. It was too late for the shore boat, so he cared for them. At midnight the baby died and, two hours later, the mother; they lay side by side and, of the two, it was the mother's face that looked the child's, and the baby's the withered old. At daybreak the boat took them away.

Weeks followed, filled with the same stagnancy of horror. The work had settled down to flat routine and life became a fearful monotony as day after day poured its brazen heat upon the empested boat. The only element of excitement lay in the ebb and flow of disease. On some days two or three, once even five, fell, and Burke's hospital over-filled and poured out its burden upon the deck; at other times there would

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be periods of three or four days without a case, and once the expiration of the mystical five days which was to free the lorcha from its imprisonment was almost reached when two men were suddenly felled as if by the same thunderbolt. Burke's worst periods were when the hospital was empty. On such days the routine of his duties took him only a little past noon, and then would come the full bitterness of the struggle. He found something to do and worked with teeth set, but his hands trembled, his nerves were tortured, and his eyes felt as if being pulled out of their sockets.

Then in the maddening monotony of this life there crept another element.

Before lying down to his snatch of horror-broken sleep, Jerry was accustomed to take a plunge over the side, although the waters of the bay were full of sharks. One night, as he was preparing to climb back upon the lorcha, he reached in vain for the rope that he had left dangling for the purpose. It had been pulled up just out of his grasp. Treading water by the black hull, Burke shouted repeatedly, but a sleep deep as the night that wrapped the vessel seemed to have its inhabitants, and his cries got no response.

"Listen," finally said Burke, talking calmly in the silence. "Listen. You know how I can swim. If that rope does not come down in ten seconds, I'll swim to the big army boat to the right there. I'll

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come back with fifty soldiers, and we'll hang you all to the mast. Remember, the sharks do not touch me."

As mysteriously as it had been raised, the rope dropped softly till its end touched the water. When Burke, dripping, sprang on deck, a heavy silence was upon the boat, broken only by the hoarse breathing of the sleepers, spread about in limp attitudes like the dead upon the battlefield.

A few days later, as he took up the demijohn in which he kept his drinking water, brought distilled from shore, he found the cork askew. He was always careful to shut the vessel hermetically, and a sudden suspicion made him turn the demijohn over and pour its contents out upon the deck. The water gurgled out, and when the vessel was empty Jerry found a little piece of cloth sticking to the inside of the gullet. He drew it out, and an icy shiver ran up his spine. He held in his hand a little square of red and yellow calico. The last cholera victim of the *Bonita*, a woman, had worn a sarong of red and yellow calico.

He threw the demijohn overboard, and when he had obtained a new one from shore he slept against it at night.

Burke began to observe his crew, and this gave him little satisfaction. Beneath the oriental passiveness, malevolence was boiling. His orders, it is true, were obeyed; but it was with heaviness of movement

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and dulness of eye; and in the periods of rest, sullen, squatting groups formed, that broke out in whisperings and oblique looks, to be scattered usually by the bowing, smirking, oily Chino, Tionko. And of all the ominous signs, there was none that displeased Burke more than the behaviour of the Chino—this evident eagerness to save the face of things, to glaze over the dark working beneath with a serene surface.

They were on one of these periods of immunity from disease which drew all nerves tense. Three days had passed, then four; they entered upon the fifth. Twenty-four hours more would set the *Bonita* free from the iron clutches of the quarantine. That day was a bad one. The solidarity in misfortune that had bound the unfortunates of the lorcha broke into a ferocious individualism. All work ceased that morning. The population of the *Bonita* divided into groups; these segregated more and more as the day advanced, till finally each man was squatting alone, with glaring threat in his eyeballs. God help the one who should come down; the execration of the whole boat was already focussed upon him.

At last the brazen day melted into the purple evening and night came, with a trembling crescent of moon in the sky and a horizon vibrating in sheet lightning. Burke prepared himself for what was

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likely to be his last night of vigil. He lit a lantern and began pacing to and fro to keep awake, usually an easy thing for him to do. Toward midnight, he stopped and leaned against the mainmast, gazing at the weird flashing of light at the horizon. Insensibly he went asleep. His head fell on his breast, his legs sagged beneath him, and he slid softly down till he sat upon the deck, his back against the mast.

Suddenly he found himself sitting bolt upright, all his faculties stiffened in alarm. The turbulent fancies of his slumber had merged into something tense and sharp as reality, and his ears still rang with low moans, a scurry of feet, and a strangled cry. Now that he was fully awake, however, the night was heavy with silence, only the tide bubbling and tinkling and crooning along the flanks of the boat. He lay back a moment, but his senses had been too acutely wrung, and, picking up the lantern, he walked forward.

Everything was quiet. Indistinct forms were stretched about the deck, and the breathing of the sleepers rhythmed the silence. Near the anchor, Burke recognised Tionko. The Chino's chest was rising and falling in deep, regular movement; he moaned inarticulately as Burke bent over him with his lantern.

Burke was turning away when, in the movement, the light of the lantern fell upon the rope up which

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he had clambered on the night of the first mysterious attack against him. Although not used any more, it had been left hanging over the side, and now, as Burke's eyes fell upon it, in the glare of the light, it was all a-tremble and a-thrill, like a live thing. Mumbling sleepily about the strength of the tide, Burke gave it a pull. A resistance met him, as that of a line with a fish hooked at the end. Puzzled, he went over the side, holding to the bulwark and bending down as far as he could, and then, as he gave another tug, two thin arms clutching the rope, and then a livid face, bobbed up slowly into the pale moonlight.

Burke let himself down, his feet against the side, his left hand grasping the rope. He bent down, his right hand caught a handful of hair, and he drew up on it. Taking the loose end of the rope, he passed it beneath both limp arms, then, holding it between his teeth, he clambered back to the deck and pulled the whole body up. He sent the rays of his lantern into the face, and recognised it as that of a young boy of the lorcha.

He was still alive, but cholera had him. Burke understood, but it was no time for punishment. He carried the stiffened form to the hospital and for an hour fought with Death; but the shock had been too much for the disease-racked body. When there was nothing left to do, Burke turned back the blanket

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over the rigid face, then stood still, his eyes cast down at the deck.

"Tionko," he finally said, as if giving the answer to some problem.

He picked up an iron belaying-pin, bared his arms, and started toward the bow. As he reached the foremast, however, three shadows sprang at him from the darkness ahead. With a sidewise leap he evaded them, then waited, crouched low, with one hand upon the deck. The men scattered in a circle surrounding him, but before they could close in he sprang at one, felled him with the shock of his body, and darted behind the mast, where he stood, waiting.

There was a moment of hesitation among the bravos, and they retreated toward the bow. Burke left the mast to peer into the darkness; a knife whizzed by his head, and he sprang back to his shelter.

They came forward again, and they were four this time. Burke saw that the defensive would be useless. With one leap he was among them, whacking to right and left with his belaying-pin. A hatchet was raised above his head, but the belaying-pin cracked the wrist that held it and it clattered to the deck. A streak of fire scorched his shoulder, but the badly-aimed dagger dropped as the belaying-pin came down upon its owner's cranium.

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And all this time, while he laid about him with instinctive parry and thrust, his eyes were riveted on an indistinct form in the shadow behind, a form from which came a running sound of encouragement, suggestion, command. Suddenly he sprang back, then to one side, then forward—and he had passed the four struggling men. He took two running steps forward, then his body left the deck and shot through the air. With a thud it struck the man in the shadow and crushed him down. Like a cat, Burke was on his feet again. He picked up the body by the waist, held it off at arm's length, brought it back close to him long enough to see Tionko's face in a grin of horror, then his arms distended like great springs and Tionko shot over the bulwarks.

He turned to the others, but they had slunk away in the darkness, and he knew that, the Chino gone, there was no more to fear.

He peered out into the water, and the phosphorescence showed him an indistinct form swimming slowly away. Then it turned back, splashing painfully, and a cracked falsetto voice whined in beggar-like modulations.

"Señor, for the love of Christ, let me on!"

Burke hesitated, and suddenly the thing was settled for him. From the right a phosphorescent flash cut the water in a streak. Swift and luminous as a

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rocket it came, straight toward the splashing form; it struck it, and then the spot burst out in a great bubble of light, in which Burke caught a flash of the Chino, his arms raised to heaven, his mouth distended in abominable fear. There was a hoarse croak, a gurgle, and then the phosphorescence sank slowly and went out in the depths below. A gentle ripple undulated over the darkened surface of the water and broke softly against the flanks of the lorcha.

Burke, dizzied, walked forward. The limp, scattered sleepers were still there as before, but in one corner a man was choking in his breathing, and near the anchor another was vibrating in his sleep in one long, continuous shudder.

There came another period of suspense. One day passed, two days passed, with no cases. The third day came, and Burke's Demon was clutching him.

He had found in the hold some rude native varnish, redolent of crude alcohol, and had brought it up to polish the crude furniture of his hospital; and now he dared not come near it. The bucket stood by the hatch, and Burke was pacing to and fro along the deck like a wild beast. Each time he passed the bucket the pungent odour stung his face, filling his mind with the memory of one of his worst periods of

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degradation and his whole physical being with a madness to wallow back into it.

He fought hard. He knew that he must throw that bucket overboard, so he forced his thoughts upon the act.

"I'll walk twenty times the length of the deck with my mind on that," he muttered to himself.

So, concentrating his brain upon the necessary deed, he began pacing up and down. At the twentieth turn he walked toward the bucket and stopped suddenly, livid as death, his eyes fixed stupidly upon his hands.

In his right hand he held a stick, a little, pliable bamboo stick.

He tried to remember picking it up; he could not. The act had been not of the will, of the will that was fighting for mastery; it had been forced by that other Power, that Power which possessed his nerves, his bones, his flesh, the Power he was seeking to kill.

"I will begin again," he muttered.

At the tenth turn he stopped short, and a cold sweat welled up upon his body. He had another stick in his hand.

And then, slowly, haltingly, but irresistibly, he approached the bucket. With somnambulant rigidity he placed the stick in the viscous stuff and slowly rotated it once, as if tentatively; then once more,

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determinedly; then again, with a sort of rage. The heavy fluid followed the stick, turned on itself faster and faster. A little whirlpool formed in the center. Burke's eyes fixed themselves upon it, and silently the little whirlpool sucked down all that was strong in him.

The stick scraped along the sides of the bucket; the liquid circled swiftly. In a minute, in the depression at the center, a black spot formed. The stick turned faster. The black spot grew; finally it was a little round ball that sank to the bottom. The stick whirled around madly. The little ball enlarged. From all sides the like molecules rushed to it, rounding it out as a snowball that is rolled downhill. At last it was like a small cannon-ball. Burke bared his arms, plunged them into the bucket, drew out the black, pitchy solid and threw it overboard.

He rushed back, and his hollowed hand scooped up a few drops of the now-white liquid and slapped it to his lips. The taste drove him mad, and, dropping down on hands and knees like a dog, he put his lips to the side of the bucket and drew in long gulpfuls.

A little later the natives were all gathered at the stern, looking with wonder upon the strange actions of the Americano.

He was squatting on deck, the bucket between his knees. At close intervals he raised it to his lips and

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poured the awful contents down his throat. Then he hugged the bucket, sobbing softly like a child being consoled after suffering, and between his laughs and his tears he gurgled to himself an endless story, full of tearful self-compassion and sobbing, endearing terms, long and soft and meaningless as the croon of a lonely babe.

Toward night he fell into a heavy stupor and lay there on his back, his face to the moonlight, and the tears drying on his cheeks.

In the morning, when the doctor's launch churned out of the river, it had in tow the boat of the *Bonita* filled with the people of the lorcha. They had been caught by a patrol boat at midnight just as they were on the point of landing on the Luneta.

The launch pulled up against the lorcha, and Huntington sprang aboard. Burke rose from the deck and waited for him. He was hollow and drooping, as if the bony frame had been removed from his body, and his eyes were dead.

A look told the doctor what had happened.

"Yes," said Burke, corroborating the surgeon's unexpressed thought.

Huntington paced the deck.

"Well," he said, finally, "you did well to stand it that long. Next time it will be longer."

Burke did not answer.

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"We have to begin again."

"Begin again," echoed Burke, mechanically.

"You'll do it, old man," said Huntington, confidently.

"My God, Huntington," said Burke, in a whisper; "my God, Huntington, I killed Tionko; I threw him to the sharks, and now, look at me!"

When the launch had left, Burke crouched down in a corner against the bulwarks, and there he sat the morning long, his eyes glued stupidly to the deck.

At noon he suddenly got up, walked firmly to the mainmast, and ran up the yellow flag.

When the boat came he went down the ladder and sat himself in the sternsheets. The man in charge looked at him inquiringly.

"Pull away," he said, shortly; "I've got it."

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VI

SOME BENEVOLENT ASSIMILATION

THAT by teaching the Filipinos the American branch of the English language it was expected to transfuse into them the customs, ideas, and ideals of the speakers of that tongue, the Maestro vaguely knew. But that this method would meet with the vigorous and somewhat eccentric success that it did in Señorita Constancia de la Rama, the Visayan young lady whom he had trained to take charge of his girls' school, he had not dreamed. So, taken unaware by the news, he flopped down on a chair with a low whistle that finished off into something like a groan as the situation presented itself to him in its full beauty. And then, taken by that perverse desire which, in time of catastrophe, impels us to rehearse all of the elements that go to make our woe particularly unbearable, he began to question the urchin who had brought the note from Mauro Ledesma, one of the native assistant teachers of the boys' school.

"Señor Ledesma gave you that note, Isidro?"

"Yes, Señor Pablo, the little Filipino maestro gave it to me," answered Isidro, careful in his discrimination of masters.

"Where was he; in the house?"

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"Oh, yes, Señor Pablo, he was in the house—he was altogether inside of the house!"

The Maestro eyed the boy with sudden suspicion. He thought that he had detected a joyous note in the statement of the native teacher's whereabouts. But Isidro's return glance was liquid with innocence.

"And he called you?" went on the Maestro.

"Oh, no, Señor Pablo, he did not call me! Ambrosio, his muchacho, called me! Señor Ledesma, he stayed inside!"

Again the Maestro started, for Isidro's sentence formation seemed suspiciously appreciative. But the little face he searched was wooden.

"He called you from the door?"

"From the window, Señor Pablo. The door, it was locked. He called this way—" (here Isidro described with his right arm a furious moulinet). "He said, 'sh-sh-sh-sh-sh,' and then he moved his arm this way—" (again the moulinet), "and then he stopped his arm and moved his finger this way—" (here Isidro help up his hand before his face and moved the index finger several times toward his nose in a gesture full of mysterious significance).

"And then you went in?"

"Yes, Señor Pablo. They opened the door, oh, just a little, like that—" (Isidro placed his hands palm to palm with an interstice between them just

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wide enough to allow the wiggling through of a very lean serpent), "and I went in and they shut the door again and put the bed up against it."

"Well, well; and Maestro Ledesma, he was inside?"

"Oh, yes, Señor Pablo, he was inside. He was writing this letter. And I think Señor Ledesma is very sick, Señor Pablo, because when he was writing he was all the time saying, 'Madre de Dios' and 'Jesus-Maria-Joseph!' and making noises like this."

And Isidro convulsed himself in an effort that resulted in a vague imitation of the wail of a carabao calf.

"And he gave you the letter when he had finished?"

"Yes, Señor Pablo, that is the letter," said Isidro, pointing to the note on the table which had been the Maestro's before-breakfast thunderbolt. "He said, 'run and give this letter to Maestro Pablo'; and so I went, but I did not go out by the door."

"You didn't?"

"No, Señor Pablo. Maestro Ledesma, he said I must not go out by the door. So they tied a rope around me, and I went out by the window, in back, and I ran here, and I did not stop to play cibay on the way, Señor Pablo."

But Isidro's virtue was destined to go unrewarded. The Maestro was deep in a re-reading of the disastrous missive:

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MUCH SEÑOR MINE AND REVERED TEACHER AND ADVISER IN MY TIMES OF CALAMITY

I beseech you, my venerated Teacher and in many ways Ancestor to come to my succor in this my most deplorable state, and pull away from me the blackness of Despair that is at the all-around of me.

I am a prisoner in my own house. In fear and trembling I dare not sleep, I dare not eat, and I cannot leave my habitation to go to the school and perform my sacred duties of teaching the ignorant and unhappy youth of my sore-tried country the blessings and deliverance of the great country under the rustling shadows of the stars and spangles which you have come so many miles across the wetness of the sea to pull the black veil of ignorance from our eyes.

Your Maestra, the Señorita Constancia de la Rama y Lacson, is camped in my sugar fields, in front of my house, and she will not decamp.

With loud threats of vengeance and audacious accusation she declares that she will marry me.

But I do not want to marry her, most excellent sir, I do not want to marry your Maestra, the Señorita Constancia de la Rama y Lacson!

O sir, my revered Master, I am all alone, my ancestral father and mother being for a few weeks at our other hacienda, and I implore you to save me from this my desperate state. Come to me, oh please, and drive the she-wolf from my door, and you shall ever receive a gentle rain of unspeakable gratitude from

The Sore Heart of
Your humble Pupil
And Beseecher
MAURO LEDESMA Y GOLES.

P.S. Viva America in Philippines! Viva Philippines in America! M. L. Y G.

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"Go to school, Isidro," said the Maestro, when he was through, in a voice so weak that the boy looked up quickly, wondering whether everyone was ill that fine, fragrant morning. "Tell Señor Abada to take charge till I come."

The Maestro felt the necessity of some deep, careful thinking. For certainly, of all the difficulties which, in his two years' career, he had alertly fought and conquered, none had ever confronted him of nature so delicate.

II

It's always when you think that you have at last mastered the problem of this life and evolved a system that promises smooth going the rest of the way that the skies tumble down upon you.

Thus it was with the Maestro. Just when he had brought the school system of his pueblo to the point where, he fondly dreamed, he could sit back and watch it run along the nickel-plated tracks that he had so carefully laid, there came the washout and the promise of wreck.

The blow was a hard one, and for a while, very much in contradiction to his custom, the Maestro buried himself in thought of past achievements and his heart softened toward himself in a great burst of self-compassion.

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He thought of the fight, the long, bitter, patient fight, he had had to find a Maestra and get his girls' school started. The hunt for a Maestra, what an Iliad, and what an Odyssey! First the careful canvas of the pueblo, the horror of the chosen at the thought of degrading themselves to the point of teaching in a public school, the rebuffs of parents, the tearful indignation of mothers; then, the pueblo proving impossible, the long rides into the surrounding country, to far haciendas, in search of the longed-for Being! Once he had crossed the swollen Ilog, and had been nearly drowned with his horse, to find the fair one of whom he had heard glowing reports—she was very well educated, si Señor, had been to collegio in Manila for four years, yes, four years; and she could play the piano, ah, divinely, and she could sew and weave jusi, just like the mother of God—to find this marvel deaf, deaf as a post!

And then, suddenly, he had met Her!

His being still thrilled at the memory. He had met her, Constancia de la Rama, at a baile. She was dancing the escupiton, and right away he saw that she was not as the others. The grace of her balancing waist, of the airy arm-gestures was not rounded and timid as that of her sisters—her grace was angular. Her black eyes did not fix a hypothetical point between her shilena-shod little feet; they looked boldly at

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those who addressed her. She did not squirm and giggle at compliments, but accepted them freely and boisterously. And the Maestro had the irritating sense of having met her somewhere, sometime, before.

He danced with her. In honour of the Americano, rigidon, escupiton, dreamy waltz had been abolished in favour of a Sousa march played in rag-time. They had danced the two-step together, and with stupor he had found himself led. It was she who determined the length of the glide, the way they should turn, how the cape of chairs should be doubled. And so they had slid along the whole floor in three steps, had whirled like tops, and his final desperate attempt to take command had resulted in a woeful lurch and tangle.

And as she stalked in her long, loose stride toward the dressing-room to readjust her saya, somewhat in distress from the Maestro's last effort, it had suddenly flashed upon him where he had seen her before. He had seen her, not in the Philippines, but in the United States, not as an individual, but as a type. He had seen her type in the co-educational colleges of his own country. She was a co-ed, that's what she was!

When she came out again, he asked her to be his Maestra.

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"Forty pesos a month," she said, dreamily. "And you would teach me American?"

"You would have to study English and teach it at the school."

"I will begin Monday," she said.

She had not even asked the consent of her parents. At the time, how pleased he had been at this refreshing independence, and yet, in the light of later events, how ominous it really was!

It was a time of joy. She had attacked her new task with alert energy. From the first the Girl's School had become the envy of the maestros of the whole province. He could see her yet, leading her stolid little brownies in song.

"Chi-rrrries rrri-pa! Chi-rrries rrri-pa! Woo weel buy my chi-rrries rrri-pa!" she tremoloed, in piercing falsetto, beating up a small typhoon with her baton of sugar-cane; "chee-rrries rrri-pa—go on! sing! all too-gidderrr! louderr! sing, I say you! —chee-rrries rrri-pa, chee-rrries rri-pa——!"

And then, charging a little girl, her right arm and index finger stiffened out like a lance:

"Hao menny ligs has ddee cao?" she screeched.

"Dee cao has too-a, too-a legs," stammered the little brown maiden, annihilated by the sudden attack.

"Ah, 'sus! Hao menny ligs?" she screeched higher, presenting her lance farther down the line.

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"Ddee cao hes *trrree* legs!"

"Hao menny ligs? Hao menny ligs? Dee cao hes trree ligs? Count! Count! Wan, too-a, trrrree, four! Dee cao hes *four* ligs. Wow! 'Sus-Maria-Joseph!"

From the first she had taken an ardent liking for all American institutions. The liberty of women especially, as she gleaned it from her readings and from sundry discreet questions put to the Maestro, enchanted her.

"Señor Maestro, in America, the young ladies, they go out in the street, all alone?"

"Well, yes; it is considered all right for them to do so, in the West, at least."

"And they go out all alone?" she repeated, pensively, in the awed tone that we are taught to use in a cathedral or pantheon.

And, a few days later:

"Señor Maestro, in America, the young girls, they go out with young men, all alone?"

"Well, yes; that is—yes; it's considered all right for young people to walk together."

"And they go out, in the evening, when the moon is shining, and walk together?"

"Well, yes, some do. You see, it's very different in America from the Philippines. You see, in America, the young men and women are more like brothers and sisters."

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"Oh, they do not marry, then?"

So that the Maestro's feelings, while watching this Americanisation, were somewhat mixed; especially so when the town council came to him in horror-stricken deputation and advised him of the fact that his Maestra was scandalising the pueblo by walking along the river banks with a young man in the evenings. The Maestra was no dreamy theorist. After that the Maestro was more careful in his inoculation of American virus.

"No, sir," said the Maestro, to himself, rising from his chair and stretching, his self-examination finished; "no, sir; since that night the shocked council called on me I've been good. I've been almighty careful not to put new ideas into her blooming young head. I've been the acme of prudence. I've——"

And suddenly he tumbled back into his chair, and his heart sank slowly down into his heels. For, he remembered, only a few days ago, in the Teachers' class, the subject of leap-year had come up, and his exposition had been—not exclusively astronomical. No, he must admit it, with that deplorable desire to astonish that possesses most of us, he had—well, his account of certain custom had been somewhat coloured, and more emphatic than the custom itself——

"Thunder!" ejaculated the Maestro, a new cold

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wave showering him. He rushed to the calendar tacked to the wall and turned the pages swiftly.

He stood before the date, petrified.

It was the twenty-ninth of February.

III

The Maestro seized a cap upon the table, plumped it upon his head, and hop-skipped-jumped down the stairs. "Action, action," his whole being cried. He glanced into the girls' schoolhouse as he passed. The Second Maestra was sitting apathetically in a chair, her baby at her breast, and the little girls, tight up against each other on their high benches, their hands folded upon their bright patadyons, looked like some little strawberry-hued birds that he had seen once in the window of an animal store, a thousand on one perch. The silence, the inaction of the place hurt him to the core, and the remark that suddenly ripped the somnolent atmosphere was so electric that the Maestra sprang to her feet.

"Do you see dde hhett?" she said, lamely, pointing to a pear tree on the chart.

But she might have saved herself the trouble. The head from which had come the remark had disappeared from the door. The Maestro was already fifty yards away, eating up the distance with long, nervous strides. He enfiladed a lane, between fields of high

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sugar cane, and finally came to the little plaza where throned the Ledesma nipa-mansion. The doors, the shutters were closed tight, as if to shut out the pestilence, and there was no sound, no movement, no sign of life. The Maestro looked about him carefully, then began to walk along the edge of the open space, peering along the vistas between the rows of cane. Soon he came upon the Maestra.

The first glance told him the magnitude of the task ahead; for the little recess in the canes had all the signs of cool and determined occupation. A red-and-white patate was spread upon the ground. On one of the corners were carefully heaped a few of the Señorita's worldly goods—a camphor-wood chest, the size of a doll's trunk; a piña camisa, tied up in a bandana handkerchief; and another handkerchief bulging and running out with a few handfuls of palay. Off the mat, on a little fire of twigs, the breakfast rice was bubbling in a big black pot.

The Maestra was seated in the centre of the mat, her limbs drawn up beneath her bright patadyon in a certain kittenish grace. She was in morning négligé and her loose hair fell down over her shoulders in a glistening black cascade. As the Maestro approached her from behind, he heard a rustling of paper, and, looking down over her head, he saw that she was reading. The Maestro blushed, not at his indiscretion,

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but at sight of big black lines announcing the name of the publication. The Maestra was reading the *Hearth Companion.* With remorse, the Maestro remembered how once, in the heat of his proselytism, he had recommended to all his Filipino teachers to subscribe to American periodicals. It was a bitter backward path that his mind was treading as he went further into this affair, tracing back to his well-meant efforts so many unexpected results.

"Good-morning, Miss de la Rama," he said, gravely.

But she read on for several lines, then, seemingly having come to a satisfactory ending of an exciting crisis, she laid the paper down carefully and, looking up with a sweet smile, "Gooda morrneen, Señor Pablo," she answered.

And in her tone, her smile, there was no fear of disapproval, but rather that bubbling satisfaction which hardly can wait to be congratulated.

"Why are you not at school?" asked the Maestro, severely.

"Ah, de school, de school, yes, de school was very nice," she sighed, with the tenderness one uses to speak of the sweet, gone past. But her interest, plainly, was elsewhere.

"To-day is leapa-year day," she went on, her voice now vibrant with decision; "and I am going to get

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married, Señor Maestro; I am to get married like an American girl; just like an American girl!" she repeated, in glowing exultation.

"Oh!" said the Maestro, with lying fervour, "somebody has asked your hand, Señorita? Let me congratulate you. And who is the lucky fellow?"

"Asked my hand?" cried the Maestra, wonderingly. "No. I said like an American girl. Nobody has asked me the hand. I will marry like an American girl. This is leapa-year day. Just like an American girl!"

"But, gadzooks!" exclaimed the Maestro, at once frightened and horrified by this strange insistence, "American girls don't marry like that. Leap-year, that's just fiction, a legend, a joke. I told you about leap-year the other day; it's just a little joke—yes, that's it, a little joke!"

But the Maestra was proof against American bluff.

"American girls, they all, all marry on leapa-year," she said, severely. "You say so the other day, and all the American books say so. Here is a paper," she said, patting the *Hearth Companion.* "There are in it ten stories about American girls, and they all marry on leapa-year day; all, *todas* ask a gentleman to marry on leapa-year day. It is not a joke."

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"But," hinted the Maestro, "maybe Señor Ledesma does not want to marry."

"That does not matter at all," said the Maestra, crisply. "If we will be Americans, we must adopt the American costumbres. There is a story in this paper —it does not matter at all; Señor Ledesma is very bashful, but this is leapa-year day."

Just then the rice rose in a foaming surge and began to trickle down the black rotundity of the pot. The Maestra sprang up with agile grace, and with a few dexterous sweeps of her little feet scattered the fire of twigs. "Will you have some breakfast?" she asked the Maestro, sweetly.

But during this movement the Maestro's brain had been working swiftly, and he had decided upon a change of base.

"Your assistant, Felicia, is becoming a very able teacher," he remarked, nonchalantly.

"Yes, she is a very good teacher," agreed the Maestra; but there was no emphasis on her adjective.

"This morning," went on the Maestro, "she was teaching the children. She said, 'Do you see the hat?' and she pointed to the pear tree."

"'Sus-Maria-Joseph!" exclaimed the Maestra; "she said that? But it is barbarous! The children, they will unlearn all that I learned them! It is—what you call?—it is impossible!"

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"Yes," went on the Maestro, seeing that he was on the right track, and using his imagination a bit; "and she told them, 'I has two hats.'"

"'I has? I has?' she said 'I has'? Que barbaridad! Señor Pablo, I will——"

And, dropping her bowl of rice, she started running toward the school, while behind her back the Maestro executed a little jig. His undignified joy, however, lasted but a few seconds. The Maestra came to an abrupt stop, looked down at her garments, and came back slowly.

"I cannot go to school in these clothes," she said, sorrowfully.

"No," admitted the Maestro; "but can you not put on your others?"

The Maestra looked embarrassed.

"Señor Maestro," she confided, "you know my mother; she is very aged, you know, and she does not know American like me, and she dislikes very much American customs——" She hesitated.

"Well?" said the Maestro, not understanding.

"She hates very much American customs, and so she hates the leapa-year custom; and this morning, this morning she told me not to come back to her house, and all my clothes are in the house."

There was a long silence. "Gosh all hemlock,"

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said the Maestro, at length, and then there was another silence.

The Maestra broke it. "Señor Maestro," she said, softly, "do you think, maybe, perhaps, you could go and ask my mother for the clothes?"

"Good golly!" remarked the Maestro. "Good golly!" he repeated, wiping his brow with his handkerchief. But he started off.

He returned a half hour later, wilted and perspiring. The old Señora de la Rama had some tenacious Chinese blood in her veins, and the struggle had been an unpleasant one. But the Maestro had won. Across his right arm, held gingerly away from him, there shimmered jusis and piñas. He passed the objects to the Maestra with averted eyes and left her in her glade.

Some ten minutes later, as the Maestro was leading his boys in their daily calisthenics, a sudden weird note came floating mournfully through the waterlogged atmosphere. The Maestro stood still, with attentive ear, and the cry cut itself into unmistakable syllables: "Chee-rrries rrri-pa; chee-rrries rrri-pa!" It came from the girls' schoolhouse.

"One-two; one-two!" said the Maestro, and the next exercise was so vigorous that before it was finished the urchins were breathless and drooping.

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IV

Crushed into a limp, discouraged mass in the depths of his cane chair, the Maestro grasped his head with both hands and thought. Thought with the Maestro was the sign of deep distress. Usually, he just acted.

In truth, the situation was not a rosy one. The Maestra was still unshaken in her marital determination; and in symbol of that state of mind she was having built a little palm hut on the spot where she had camped in Ledesma's cane fields. Three taos, impressed by her from her father's dependents, were working night and day; the four corner posts, the bamboo-strip floor, the nipa roof, were already up, and only the thatch walls remained to be put on. From behind the closed shutters of his father's mansion, Ledesma saw the fort arise above his sugar-canes, and he cowered in dark corners, studying a Civil Service pamphlet with vague projects of escaping to Manila to study typewriting and enter a government office. Also, he had sent an urgent note to his father, off in one of their other haciendas, bidding him to come back quick to protect him. The absence of Ledesma from the boys' school was bad enough, but much worse was the realisation that the truce arranged with the Maestra was fast becoming impossible. When the Maestro had bearded Señorita

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Constancia's mother and had returned triumphant with the objects that were to enable the young lady to make decent appearance at school, he had forgotten that, in the Philippines, clothes are of the kind that must be washed often; so that, when two days later he had to repeat the performance, and saw before him a future filled with the same monotonous prospect, his ardour had undergone several degrees' cooling. This very morning the struggle to obtain a few shreds of presentable clothing from the irate mother had been so violent, and the subsequent walk across the plaza with the hard-won bundle, beneath the appreciative eyes of the whole town, had been so self-conscious that the Maestro had sworn that it was the end of *that*. A better solution, a final solution, must be quickly found.

Out of his bitter reflections the Maestro was suddenly startled by a drumming of hoofs and a shout outside. He went to the window, and a white man in khaki, cork-helmeted, was pulling up his horse before the steps.

"Huston!" shouted the Maestro, in delighted tones. He hop-skipped across the room, dashed down the stairs, and whacked the newcomer, just dismounting, a tremendous slap on the back. "You old son-of-a-gun," he drawled, tenderly, seizing his hand and moving it up and down like a pump-handle.

The man's eyes gleamed, and a flush of pleasure

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came to his tanned cheeks. "Here, here, old man," he said, deprecatingly, "you don't seem alive to the—er—dignity of my profession."

"Sky-pilot, eh?" shouted the Maestro. "Gospel-sharp; stuck up about it, eh? Darn-if-I-care; you're still a good fellow. Golly, but I'm glad to see you," he cried, nearly knocking him down with a dig in the short ribs. "Gee, but I'm glad to see you——" and he shook him till his teeth rattled. "How long're you going to stay?"

"Three days," answered Huston; "want to start a mission here."

Tolio, the Maestro's muchacho, was unsaddling the pony. The two friends climbed the steps into the house. Unbuckling his belt, the missionary threw his long Colt's upon the table and dropped into a chair, and then they began to talk. It was a strange performance. The words swept out of their mouths in an uninterrupted, turgid, furious stream; they shouted, stammered, giggled; they laughed like artillery thunder, gesticulated like windmills, a hectic flush upon their cheeks, their brains awhirl, mad with the madness that seizes the man of lone stations when at last he can communicate his thoughts, pour out what has been dammed in so long, free himself of the stagnant burden of never-expressed feeling, emotion, inspiration, theories.

But after a half-hour of this, the Maestro began

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to subside. Huston still talked, told of the cholera in Manapla, the mud between Bago and Jinagaran, the palay famine in Oriental Negros, the anti-fraile mob in Silay, the embezzlement of the Provincial Treasurer. But the Maestro was silent, his eyes upon his feet.

"What the deuce are you thinking about?" at last exclaimed the missionary, suddenly very much aware of his loquacity.

"By Jove, I've got it," said the Maestro, rising to his feet like an automaton, his eyes fixed as if he saw written in space the solution of some sore world-problem. He took three great strides across the room, wheeled, and stopped before the missionary. "Yes, sir, I've got it," he repeated, enthusiasm beginning to thrill in his voice.

"For goodness' sake," asked the missionary, "got what?"

"I've got—well, something for you to do," answered the Maestro, enigmatically; "yes, sir, I've a job for you, Huston."

He sat down at the table and scribbled two notes. "Tolio," he called. The boy appeared at the door. "Take this," ordered the Maestro, giving the boy the first note, "to Maestro Ledesma. Tell him to come right away. Tell him to come around by the river so that the Maestra cannot see him."

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"Si, Señor," said the faithful servant.

"And after Maestro Ledesma has entered the house here, not before, mind you, Tolio, you go to Señorita Constancia and give her this note," went on the Maestro, giving the boy the second slip of paper.

"Si, Señor," said the boy, carefully taking one note in his left hand and the other in the right.

The two friends were again left alone, but the spell had been broken and they did not renew their outpourings. The Maestro was the prey of a fixed idea. He paced back and forth like a lion in his cage, full of the fever of resolve. At intervals he punched his left palm with his right fist, then varied the performance by punching his right palm with his left fist; incoherent exclamations growled in his throat: "He's got to, that's all; things are going to smash; I'll make him; it's the only way!"

Huston looked on curiously. He had been scrub on the football team when the Maestro had been captain and star; and the relation had left indelible marks upon him in an unreasoning, instinctive respect, a subtle sense of inferiority which no achievement in after-life would ever enable him to overcome. Now, however, this sense of fealty was being rudely put to proof. A horrible suspicion was setting his heart a-pound.

The shrinking appearance of Ledesma at the door

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broke the painful silence. He was a slim, limp young man, with pomaded hair, clad in a white suit generously sprinkled with cologne water, and, in spite of the cigarette held delicately between his fingers, was evidently ill at ease.

And little chance he had to recover from his emotion. "Ah, Ledesma," said the Maestro, frigidly. "I want to talk to you, my boy, and seriously, too. Come into my room."

And, placing a heavy hand upon the young fellow's shoulder, he steered him into an interior chamber, closing the door behind them.

To Huston, left alone, there came sounds of a furious altercation—that is, furious from one party; for from one weak voice there seemed to come only mild expostulation, faint denials, pathetic pleas, negatived by the cold, incisive tones of the Maestro. Little by little, however, the begging voice rose, grew rebellious, squealed, trembled with an indignation that seemed almost righteous. The Maestro began to thunder. "You've got to; you've got to," he shouted. "I'll make you do it!" "No, no, I won't," answered the other voice, settling down to hopeless, stubborn denial; "I won't, I won't!"

The door opened and the Maestro dashed out. He gave a wild look around the room, and his eyes lit upon the missionary's revolver upon the table. He

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pounced upon it, snapped it open, and the cartridges fell out. After a rapid examination, to make sure that the cylinder was empty, the Maestro snapped the weapon shut again and bounded back into the interior room, closing the door after him. Then his voice became icy and menacing. There was a sharp click; the protesting voice weakened into a faint wail, and there was silence.

"Huston," shouted the Maestro, "let me know when Señorita Constancia comes in."

But at the sound of the sweet name there was a scuffle inside. The door burst open, and Ledesma dived head first across the threshold; but a long muscular arm went out after him, grabbed him by the trousers, and jerked him back inside.

Again the Maestro's voice rose in a few crisp sentences, and there was no answer to them, only a faint snivelling, which diminished gradually. The door reopened slowly, and the Maestro and Ledesma came in together, arm in arm—that is, the Maestro's arm was twined flexibly but inexorably about Ledesma's limp member. Ferocious triumph beamed upon the face of the gentle pedagogue; Ledesma was wilted, tear-stained, and despairing. At the same moment, radiant, smiling, alert as a kitten, Señorita Constancia appeared at the outer door. She wore a long-train blue-silk skirt, a cream-coloured camisa through

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whose shimmering, puffing sleeves her arms glowed like frosted gold; over her bare shoulders a jusi pañuelo was lightly laid, the two ends meeting upon her breast in a golden brooch. She swept gracefully through the room, her bracelets clinking on her wrists, toward Huston, whom she had met before, shook hands with him Anglo-Saxon style, bowed to the Maestro, calmly ignored Ledesma, and whirred down into the depths of a cane chair.

"Huston," said the Maestro, gravely, "I want you to marry these two people."

But the missionary, so far petrified with wonder, suddenly rebelled. "Look here, Paul," he burst out, "what kind of a thing are you getting me into? To me it looks—well, at least irregular, very irregular. To tell the truth, old fellow, your actions seem to me —er—well, singular, very singular. I—you——"

"You just leave this thing to me," interrupted the Maestro, with an authoritative nod toward the poor churchman, whose protesting attitude was fast oozing away in the subtle sense of inferiority still sticking to him from the days when the Maestro was gridiron captain and star and he a humble "scrub"; "you just leave that to me. Go ahead with the ceremony; that's all you have to do!"

But, with the courage of the meek, Huston fought on. "I at least must know," he said, firmly,

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"whether these two people consent to this—er—union." He turned to the Maestra. "Do you want to marry this young man?" he asked, pointing to the snivelling Ledesma.

"Oh, yes," answered the Maestra, suavely, "he must marry me."

"And you," went on Huston, turning to Ledesma, "do you wish to take this maid to wife?"

Ledesma opened his mouth like a carp, then shut it again. He looked fearfully toward the Maestro. The Maestro glared significantly. Ledesma's hands began to wring each other; beads of perspiration appeared about his lips. "I—I——" he stammered.

"Look a-here," thundered the Maestro, impatiently; "what the deuce is the need of all this fuss? He's got to marry her, that's all. He's got to marry her, do you understand?" he repeated, a vision of his ruined schools aflame in his mind; "it's the kind of marriage that's *got* to be, catch on?"

It is the misfortune of us humans that our speech is, after all, but a poor instrument for the expression of our thoughts. The same words, the same phrases, are capable of diverse interpretation. For instance, to the Maestro, the kind of marriage that *has* to be was merely the marriage that would settle the crisis of his schools. For the missionary there was only

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one species of marriage that has to be—not at all that in the Maestro's mind.

"Oh," said the missionary; "oh, *that's* the way it is, is it?" He turned to Ledesma and, pointing to him a long finger trembling with righteous indignation, "Stand up and be married, young man," he said, icily.

As Ledesma was already on his feet, the command was hardly necessary; but it dashed out of that youth's heart the last spark of hope that had flamed up at the missionary's intervention. Taking Señorita Constancia's arm, the Maestro led her to the groom.

"Take her hand," said the missionary, sternly.

Tremblingly the groom obeyed, and was bound for better or for worse.

It cannot be said that the ceremony was followed by the usual joyous whirr of congratulations. The bride calmly turned her back upon the groom and engaged Huston in a lively conversation. The Maestro, suddenly turned craven, went out into the kitchen on the pretext of seeking refreshments, and meanwhile Ledesma quietly but hurriedly slunk out of the house. The Maestra, from the window, saw him running along the street, but she only laughed. She alone was at ease. The Maestro, returning with a bottle of Spanish wine and a plate of bananas, seemed to have lost all his assurance; the missionary's virtuous indig-

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nation was fast leaving him, in spite of his efforts, and doubt again was disturbing his spirit. There was something ominous in the air.

Nor was this presentiment to prove a false one. Perhaps half an hour later, as the Maestra was saying good-by, Isidro pattered in with a note to the Maestro. It was from Ledesma.

SEÑOR MAESTRO, TYRANT AND DARKEST DESPOT:—When you will receive this note I will be gone and out of the reach of your most unjust, tyrannic and unholy arm. I am embarking at the present time upon a banca, I will take a lorcha at the dismouthing of the Ilog River to Ilo-Ilo and from that charming city I will go to Manila to study typewriting and thus enable me to enter the Administration of the Government of this my sore-tried and much in the past tyrannized and devastated country which will rise like the phenix bird from its cinders, blooming afresh from the long-sleeping volcano when it awakes and lights up the world with the blessings of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity which to my ignorant countrymen I will teach like the swallow which none die without God on High knowing it feed his little young one that do not know how to flie above the dark ignorance at the all-around of them. It gives me great pleasure, Oh, sir, to proclamate to you that the unholy union in which you like the blackest czar of despotic Russia forced upon my palpitating heart is null. My father who has returned from his hacienda tells me that according to the law I cannot marry without his permission until I am twenty-five. I am only twenty and my father —Oh, sir, how sweetly paternal is a father—will not per-

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son, so my so-called marriage is a void.
mit me to marry Señorita Constancia de la Rama y Lac-
Hoping sir, that Remorse will soon cause your heart to weep I am

No longer your pupil and assistant-maestro
MAURO LEDESMA Y GOLES.

"Thunder!" exclaimed the Maestro, suddenly again belligerent. "Let's get after him!"

But the Maestra had picked up the letter and was reading it.

"Oh," she said, when she had finished; "oh, that is very nice. Now I can—what you call?—ah, divorce; I can divorce—just like an American girl!"

And thus it is that the Girls' School of Balangilang is still the envy of the maestros for leagues around.

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VII

A JEST OF THE GODS

IT was rather a disreputable place, and really we were there by chance, a dance upon the British warship anchored near Cavité and the breakdown of the returning launch leaving us upon the stone quay of the Binondo *estero* at a shameful hour. The time spent bobbing upon the waters while with fervent ejaculations the engineer experimented with the frivolous gasoline engine had been ecstatically cool. Now the city exhaled upon us her feverish breath, in a short time the sun would pour down its blistering rays, and we could not bear thought of room and bed. So we sat around the big narra table at Timke's, clinking with straws the ice in our glasses.

There was a scuffle in an obscure corner of the room; then, carried by muchachos, there passed beneath the light a limp, dangling corpse. They were not over-careful, the muchachos. Two were at the legs, two at the arms, so that the head hung down, lamentable, with mouth open. They crossed the room and vanished through a door into the rear apartment;

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and our last glimpse was of the opalescent reflection of a lamp upon a cranium astonishingly bald.

"Old man Dickson," somebody said, significantly; "paralysed, as usual."

"That man," said Courtland, with a vague gesture toward the door just slammed; "that man is the victim of a most atrocious and absurd tragedy."

And he told it to us thus:

I first knew him through his newspaper work. Every morning he shuffled gently into my office and asked if there was anything new. He did this with a want of assurance strange in a reporter, and yet not at all with humility; but rather in a dreamy, detached manner, as if he really did not care if there was anything new, and would probably not remember it if there were; as if the thing of importance, after all, were the internal problem upon which he was pondering, pondering with a discreet intensity that left his arms to hang in uncouth limpness, his feet to drag, his head to sink sideways toward his right shoulder, his whole body to appear as if abandoned, utterly abandoned, of the spiritual being—to hang, loose, limp, ungoverned, like a scarcrow which lives, gesticulates, postures only with the caprices of the wind. His whole body, I said; I should except the eyes. They were magnificent eyes, large, limpid, serenely blue.

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They were not abandoned; they were fixed. But it was not at anything outside. It was at something within. As you sought them you became aware of that. You were not seen—you were not of importance. The sun, the sky, men, women, were not seen—they were not of importance. These eyes were looking inside. As you examined them, you realised that it was the back of them that was turned toward you, the reflective back wall of them, and that their working, searching, penetrating part was turned inward, poring there in the shifting gloom at—I don't know what vision.

Don't think that I noted all this at first. It came slowly, by degrees. No, the first thing that impressed me was his baldness, his extraordinary baldness. It seems nothing to tell you that on his head there was not a suspicion of hair; that's common enough, doesn't express it at all. Likewise to explain that there were no brows, that the lashes were gone, that, of course, his whole face was hairless—this is prattle, mere childish, puerile prattle. Usual expressions, the ordinarily adequate figures—comparisons with knees, with billiard balls—sink into impotence, are sacrilege before the Awfulness of the thing. Nothing usual can express it. It was something appalling. It was a curse, a visitation. It was as if God's lightning had struck his pate,

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blasted it clean—No, that does not express it. There was something solid, established, immutable about the thing that cannot be explained by visions of accidents, of cataclysms, however potent. It savoured rather of some law of Nature, of the patient, irrevocable work of obscure Forces through the ages—say like the glacier-polishing of granite domes such as I've seen in the California Sierra, something geologic and eternal. Yes, that was it: that man's pate must have been polished and repolished with malevolent earnestness for years, for ages, through inconceivable æons. His father, his grandfather, his ancestors after and before the deluge, from the first day of creation, nay, back into the reign of chaos, must have been bald, abominably bald, to explain that mournful head there before me. As a matter of fact, I should have been surprised at something else; for, at the sight of a volume lying open upon my desk, he had launched upon a dissertation on Keats, something absolutely precious in quaint insight, in subtlety of appreciation. But I was fascinated with the head; that baldness held me in its toils, froze my eyes, tugged my heart, drugged my brains. And it was not till he had gone that I realised I had been listening to exquisite discourse.

Do not be too much surprised. Such a thing is to be accepted, almost expected, from a Manila news-

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paper man. The Manila newspaper man is a singular genus. Always he has talent; sometimes more than that. But of course there's always something the matter. This something is what makes him so interesting. And it leads, also, to a certain conventionality in intercourse with him. For instance, to a Manila newspaper man you never mention the Past. There *is* no past. He is supposed to have sprung like Venus from the sea, full-panoplied—with his education, his talent, his gentle scepticism—right on the Escolta. That's the rule.

I knew the rule; so if I broke it, it shows merely that my awakened curiosity was too much for my *savoir faire*. I wanted to know, that's all. I searched for and found his haunt.

Every evening, after his work, he crossed over to the Metropole. He had a queer, apologetic way of progressing, with his right side ahead of his left, as if ceaselessly jostled by an imaginary crowd. Gently, with that sideways motion, he shuffled into the big room and made for a table in the corner of the veranda. He was always very cleanly dressed in white, unstarched, which I suspected was the result of his own industry in his little back room; but his shoes were down by the heels, which added greatly to the general humility of his appearance. Carefully he placed his chair at a certain distance, known of

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him only, from the table; then he sat down slowly, folded his arms upon the table, his body inclined a little forward. Without a movement of the folded arms he raised one finger of the right hand, in a gesture almost heraldic in its sobriety, and the boy, attentive by his side, immediately brought him a small glass of cloudy green liquid. This he sipped slowly. A gray, opalescent cloud came over his eyes; his head fell slightly toward his right shoulder in an attitude of careful consideration. When he had finished, he remained thus a long time, immovable, petrified in his gentle brooding; then up would go his finger in that strange gesture, almost imperceptible, but infinitely commanding, as if it came not from himself, but as a manifestation of some superior power —and the boy, attentive, immediately brought another glass of the cloudy-green stuff, which he sipped to the dregs, motionless and fatal like some hierarchic figure. Two hours, three hours, he kept this up, then suddenly he moved. Both his arms went up and around in a wide, noble gesture; his hands—long, fine-veined hands—settled upon his head, his absurd bald head, as if in protection, in vague protest at possible levity; he leaned forward and was asleep. He slept there, upon the table, his hands upon his head, his cheek upon his arms; his face, turned to the light, was relaxed in infinite lassitude, as a child's

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after crying; his mouth, slightly open, let pass his breathing, faint, like a babe's—and once in a while he sighed, a sigh not deep, not peevish, not rebellious, but resigned, rather, patient and unhappy. There was something incredibly babyish about the whole thing—the sleep, the sigh, the posture, even that extraordinary bald head gleaming between the fingers, pudgy with shadow—something that would have drawn the heart of woman in tenderness, tugged at it with the pang-desire to console, to cherish, to kiss. Yes, a woman would have kissed that absurd bald head, would have smothered that gentle sigh. A woman would have, I tell you! And he didn't know, didn't know, the fool baby-man!

After a time I began to sit at his table. He accepted me without emotion. Life to him, evidently, was full of such facts as my presence there, facts to which one must adapt one's self with the least possible fuss. He seemed, in fact, in perpetual process of readjustment. He'd sit there quietly, sipping his green poison, till diabolically I'd mention some name of literary fame. It was like pressing a button—the effect was so instantaneously sure. First would come a few detached sentences, like a modulation. Then insensibly he had slid into the main theme, and it was —what shall I call it?—exquisite, there's no other word for it. There was such depth to the thing, such

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subtlety of dissection, such a wealth of sudden, baring illuminations—and all that cloaked, softened in a haze of gentle scepticism that left nothing of dogmatic asperities. I compared it with the snorting, imperial utterances of my German Professor at college. It was French, that's what it was, in its breadth, its charity, its continual attenuation and inter-correction, its horror of the dictatorial, the pedantic. But don't think that he animated himself in this. No, he kept his immovable—I came near saying "silent," and really, even while he spoke, he gave an impression of silence—his immovable, detached calm. All this, it came as from another man. It *was* another man, the past man. He was not creating now; he was merely re-reading the creations of the past man, objectively, too, with a certain mild astonishment at the performance.

"You must have studied deeply," I said, one night, as I sat, still dazzled, long after he had spoken his last word.

He looked at me hazily. "I have my Harvard Ph. D.," he said, absent-mindedly. "I lectured afterward."

"Then, for God's sake," I blurted out, tortured by the vision of that life calmly ruining itself; "for God's sake, what are you doing here?"

His eyes turned absolutely inside out. From their

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interior contemplation they flashed outward. He was looking at me; for the first time I had that feeling completely—that he was looking at me, a hard, profound, startled stare.

Then, before I could make a movement, a gesture of protest, he had risen to his feet. "Good-night," he said, brusquely, and he had shuffled out of the room.

For three days he did not appear. I had hurt him, insulted him. I waited for him, with a desire for reparation. Yet when he finally came I saw that I was mistaken. There was no resentment, absolutely none, in his manner as he shuffled up to the table and sat down. But before even the usual green poison had been set before him he had drawn from his breast pocket a square piece of cardboard and had thrown it to me.

I looked at it stupidly, at first without comprehension. Then the whole thing flashed upon me in an understanding so sudden, so complete, so profound, that it simply dazed me, left me there inert between two extraordinary and conflicting desires to laugh and weep—laugh, extravagantly, madly; weep, with the same abandon, thoroughly, humidly, sentimentally.

It was an answer to my question. And it was a picture. A picture of himself—I recognised the fine,

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white forehead, the sensitive mouth, the wide, pure eyes. But on the cranium there was hair, hair, do you hear? Not a little of it, not a mere trifle, but hair, an abundance of it, a magnificent leonine mane, a wealth of it, waving and rolling, curling over the ears, setting off the whole person in distinction. There was hair on his head; there were brows over his eyes, dark brows that must have contrasted finely with the wide, blue orbs. There it was, the answer. He had had hair; he was bald. This was the whole of his ridiculous tragedy. He had had hair, do you understand?—and now he had none.

There I had it, complete; but he evidently did not think so. Or rather he didn't bother about me at all. A powerful impulse to unburden himself possessed him now; all the accumulated wonder and pain at Fate's wanton outrage poured out of him, hurling away like so much chaff the rigid dam of restraint held against it so long. He talked now, at first in broken phrases, then more freely as he went on, in a smooth current, hopeless, fatalistic, but tinged with a strange self-compassion. And yet there was the old detachment. He seemed analysing someone else, telling the pitiful adventure of some other man, as if he could not believe it had occurred to himself, as if his credulity did not suffice before the wonder and cruelty of the thing. A mild astonishment pervaded him.

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It had begun with a little gray spot on the crown, a very little spot. That was several years ago. He counted, and I was astonished: he must be very young yet. He didn't pay much attention to it. He was happy, then, he explained, and it took much to bother him. He had just accepted a post in the English department of a Western University. It was a lovely place, by the sea. There were hills behind, all velvety gray and gold. His house was covered with climbing roses, absolutely covered, embowered in them like a nest. His associations were pleasant; he loved his work. His lectures were attracting some attention. It was lovely. He was happy. And then there was——

He stopped and was silent quite a while; his eyes, hazy with retrospection, took on tones of marvellous softness. And when he began again I had the impression that he had left out something.

Well, after a while that little patch of gray hair began falling out, and finally it was a neat round tonsure on the top of the head. Then, down by his right ear, another spot began to gray. He watched it with some concern. After a while, just as before, the gray hair fell out, and he had two little bald places. It began to make some difference, really. The first little tonsure was at least symmetrical, could be called interesting. But that incongruous spot above his

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right ear—no words could soften that. It was at least strange, singular.

People thought it so; at least he imagined that they did. Sometimes a co-ed in his class would break out in a sudden giggle. That hurt his work. He studied much over his lectures; but as to the form, he was wont to extemporise a great deal. And one can't extemporise while a co-ed giggles. Besides, he was in the grasp of a perverse doom. A third gray spot had appeared, above the neck. He knew that three bald spots would be clear ridicule. He began to haunt barber shops; oils, restorers, all sorts of extravagant shampoos did no good. Soon three bald spots shone white, like famine in the remaining luxuriance of his hair.

There was no mistaking it now. At first, at the Faculty Club, they had slapped him on the back and joked. Now they were discreetly and ominously silent. The very word hair, when dropped by some giddy confrère, fell into something like a vacuum of sombre consternation. In the lecture room he often lost the thread of his thought, remained long pained minutes in speechless befuddlement. It was becoming intolerable.

Then came the crowning disaster. In the blindness of his desperation he was induced by a magazine advertisement to try some new and wondrous hair-

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remedy. The result was fatal. The stuff turned in spots the colour of his hair from brown to rusty red. In spots, mind you; so that now he was piebald—red, brown, gray, and white. The morning that, before a glass, he faced the hideous fact, he nearly cut his throat. And he was never able to get to his lecture. He tried three times; three times he stalked firmly along the walk, his hat pulled deep about his shame; he circled the Hall a dozen times. He could not enter, simply could not.

Happily, it was near the summer vacation, and he had no trouble obtaining leave for the rest of the term. He fled the college town. He wandered through the big city nearby, aimless, alone, tortured. A good deal of his time was spent upon the water-front. It's always windy there, and men pull their hats down about their ears. Ships began to exercise on him a strange fascination. He dreamed of islands, desert islands, lonely, unpeopled islands. One day, hardly aware of it, he walked the plank of a little brigantine —the *Tropic Bird*, some such name—and begged the captain to take him. The captain did, as a green hand. They sailed off.

He was still full of gratitude toward that captain. It seemed that he never could get used to seamen's work. "I couldn't climb spars," he explained; "I'd get dizzy. I tried and tried; I couldn't." The cap-

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tain made a cabin-boy of him. Hence his eternal gratitude. "He was a gentleman, a thorough gentleman, with all his roughness. When he saw that I couldn't climb spars, he made me a cabin boy. I swabbed the floor, waited at meals, washed dishes, and helped the cook. That captain, sir, was a gentleman!"

Really, he was absolutely broken. The insidious disease was continuing its damnable work. From Honolulu they picked up a charter for the Philippines. When they arrived in Manila, he was absolutely bald, bald as I saw him now. "No hair, no brows, no lashes; bald, ludicrous, ignoble, unclean!" He raised one finger; the boy ran to him; he sipped the green liquor.

But he did not stop there. He began it again, the lamentable tale, with new details, with inexorable precision. He was a long time on a description of his departed hair. A wealth of adjectives, subtle and splendid, came to his lips without effort. He found new, caressing words, as a mother speaking of her dead babe. And one got no impression of vanity from it, either. It was something past now, extraneous, so irrevocably detached from him that he could speak of it without egotism. He dwelled again upon his happiness—the Western College, the silvery hills, the rose-covered cottage. "And then there was——"

Again he stopped, and again, when he resumed, I

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had the impression of something vital left out. It was this, I think, that kept me at it; for every night, now, I heard it, the odious story, with an augmentation of details, a progressive firmness of construction. He'd begin with his gray spot and run the whole gamut of his pilous degradation. I grew infinitely weary of it, but there was the secret, the secret still held from me. It was exasperation at this continuous evasion, I think, coupled with invincible lassitude at the old tale, that led me, one night, madly to exclaim:

"Yes, yes, Dickson; but the girl, the girl; tell me about the girl now!"

By his sudden start, by his affrighted stare, I knew that I had hit it, absolutely hit it. Oh, no, I don't take much credit for that. *Cherchez la femme;* divested of the cynicism placed upon it by its makers, this precept is fundamental in the game of human analysis.

There was a She—yes, there was. A young girl (he's far from old himself, remember, in spite of his pate); an angel. He loved her; she loved him. She had a precious gift of imagination. He had hoped, under his critical guidance, to see it bloom into something—a talent, a genius, perhaps. But now——

"Man, man!" I almost screamed; "you fool, you imbecile; why don't you go back, go back to her? What the deuce is it, this more or less vegetation upon

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your head, when you have that, that of all things precious, when you have Love, Love, man!"

I was furious with him. I talked in the same vein, very extravagantly, no doubt. I gesticulated; I shouted. He listened quietly, a considering frown over his browless eyes.

No, it could not be; it could not be. I didn't understand, couldn't understand. He had left when it began. I couldn't understand. He used to walk with her in the evening. He was working hard those days; at night he'd be tired. They'd stroll gently up a canyon (Co-ed Canyon, I think he called it). They'd sit in the grass. He'd rest his head on her shoulder. Then she'd stroke that tired head, run her light fingers through his——

"Man, man!" he shouted; "imagine that, now. Imagine me there once more, and she, with that familiar gesture, that sacred gesture, running her fingers——"

Slowly he passed his hands over the atrocious smoothness of his cranium in a long, shuddering movement. "Imagine that," he said, once more, in a broken whisper.

He raised his finger. He sipped. I gave up. Really, you know, the way he told it, it was rather convincing. I left him to his self-abasement. He lived on his harmless life:—by day the uncongenial task; the

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maudlin dissipation by night. And every evening he told me his story, his lugubrious story, till at times a whiff of his madness communicated itself to me, entered my blood, and, taking up my own particular wrongs, I descended with him into orgies of tremulous self-compassion.

Then occurred something which gave me a ray of hope.

It was at a fire. Cholera had broken out in the city and the health officials, with that brisk cruelty in which revels man, from medieval inquisitor to common policeman, when persuaded of the righteousness of his cause, were *cleaning out* barrios. This particular barrio was a miserable assemblage of nipa huts in the Paco district. It was burning well when I arrived, in one large, clear flame that rose with a single, powerful twist toward a sky purple with sunset. It was quite a fine spectacle. Society had deserted the Luneta drive for the more flaring show; out on the rosy edge of the conflagration was an intricacy of victorias and calesins; a stamping of pony hoofs. Jusis shimmered; white suits gleamed; beneath the crackling of tortured nipa rose a low hum of polite conversation, musical laughter, melodious Ohs and Ahs at particularly brilliant pyrotechnics. All Society was there, reclining upon cushioned seats with a fine feeling of security before this proof of official energy.

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But in the shadow, on the other side, I could vaguely descry other spectators, unkempt men and women, standing up, stiff and motionless, with little bundles in their hands, on their heads, stupid before this magnificent destruction of their homes. Probably it had never occurred to them that these huts, these hearths, held such possibilities of splendour. The revelation paralysed them. They gazed with wide-open eyes, with open mouths, silent, dark, immovable.

Then suddenly, in the peace, the security of the moment, there rose a shrill, mad cry, right from the flames. The buzz of conversation halted brusquely. White handkerchiefs rose convulsively to whitening lips. The firemen, off on one side, began an inexplicable running to and fro. The nipa roared. And right from the flame, in maddening continuance, as if from a soul bodyless and in torture, came the high, shrill, quavering cry.

Ladies began to faint in their victorias; officers bent over them in impotent solicitude, their faces as white as the women's. Other men sprang from their carriages with extraordinary resolution, ran forward and stopped short before the heat. A Met. policeman, huge and gaunt, skipped up and down in some sort of monstrous dance, wringing his hands in plain view. But on the other side, the sombre spectators

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remained banked in immobility. Only, their eyes opened wider and their pupils gleamed.

Then I saw Dickson. He was walking toward the furnace, his right shoulder pushed forward, his body flattened apologetically, begging passage through an imaginary throng. He entered the circle of light; a whiff of hot air sent his hat off, and his head, his monstrous bald head, shone a moment in rosy hues. I shouted. He kept straight on, humble, mournful. A roar of warning, of astonishment, came from the crowd. He kept on, his head pensively drooped sideways. He disappeared into the fire. Shrieks, yells, a terrific tumult came from the carriages. And still, as if borne up in the flame, springing with one single, powerful twist to the purple sky, there rang the long, shrill, continuous cry. It rose louder, more piercing, till it vibrated in our marrow in intolerable pain. And then we became aware that it was nearer—it was among us. A muffled, dripping, inchoate figure was stumbling into the outer circle of light. I sprang forward; I tore off the dripping mantle, and there was Dickson, his head dropped sideways, pensively considering a little girl in his arms, a little Malay girl, half-naked, who screamed still, too dazed with the horror to know that it was past.

Really, he started to protest right away, it was quite easy. And he made it almost so with his calm

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explanation. The huts were built on poles, so that the fire was rather high, and close to the ground it was not so hot—rather cool, he would have us believe. Then the barrio was laid out with a plaza in the centre, and it was there that, crouching on the ground, the little girl had been, still unhurt. He had noticed, before going in, a pile of old blankets lying in the dirt, and a barrel of water, the barrio's old supply, nearby. By soaking the blankets, muffling them about him and keeping low, he had been able to get in and out without much discomfort—he coughed —a little smoke, that's all, a few superficial burns— he staggered.

Many willing hands there were to claim the little girl, who was sobbing gently now. We started toward my carriage. A thunder of clapping hands, a roar of acclaim, announced his first step, and then his calm deserted him. "My hat, my hat!" he shouted; "where's my hat? Give it to me quick!" He trembled with excitement. He began to swear. "My hat; who's got my hat?" he shrieked, absolutely unstrung. I gave him mine. He crushed it down to his ears. We slunk off to the carriage, and I drove off with my Hero cowering and darting haunted side-looks.

As we passed the Parian gate, he said: "Come on; let's go to the Metropole."

"No, you don't," I said, briskly. "You're going

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straight to your room. You're going to sit down, with a box of cigars at your elbow. You're going to think, sit up all night and think. I'll give you the theme. Imagine Her at that fire, a while ago. Imagine Her impression, and weigh that against the puerility of hair."

"Good Lord, Courtland, what a sentimentalist you are," he exclaimed. "What a sentimentalist!" he repeated, a while later, musingly.

But he did not get off at the Metropole, and I left him at the door of his house. He was not at the Metropole the next day, nor the next, nor the next. A week later I heard that he had gone over to a new paper, under much more pleasant management, and that he held a desk position. I did not follow the evolution closely, for I was busy those days. We had been wrestling long with the monetary problem, and now the United States Government was sending us an Expert, an Authority, a Professor Jenkinson, who was to settle the whole thing for us as by legerdemain. We were preparing data for him and were infernally busy. But what I did see of Dickson was rather encouraging. The little red veins were disappearing from his cheeks, a certain twitch of the right corner of his mouth was relaxing; an indefinable briskness was pervading his whole being, the manner of the man who works hard and likes his work.

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Finally the Big Man came. There was a tremor of expectation in official and social circles—official, for obvious reasons; in social, because of the charming fact that the Professor came to Manila with a bride, romantically wooed and won in California, in passing, as it were. A reception was announced at the Malicañan.

I went. I was late. The place was ablaze with lights as I drove up, and polite conversation hummed out of the windows like honey-laden bees. I did not leave my carriage right away, my curiosity being aroused by the suspicious behaviour of a man.

He was dodging among the shadows like a malefactor, first behind one veranda post, then behind another. Then he stood a while at the bottom of the steps, buttoning up his white jacket with an air of great resolution, and mounted. He got up four steps, then, suddenly turning, pell-melled down again in ridiculous funk. More sneaking in the massed gloom beneath the veranda; then again he stood at the bottom of the steps, pulling down his jacket in immense resolution. Up half-a-dozen steps, and again the helter-skelter retreat. But this time I had followed, and he ran plump into my arms.

It was Dickson, and his face in the light showed shockingly haggard. I don't think he knew me at

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first. But when he did, he gripped my arm convulsively and ran me into the shadow.

"What the devil——" I began, exasperated.

"It is she," he said; "she—my God!"

"She," I repeated, stupidly; "who is *she?*"

"Mrs. Jenkinson," he gasped; "good God, Courtland, can't you understand? The girl, the girl, you know—she's up there"—he pointed upward to the light—"she's up there; she's Mrs. Jenkinson!"

I was incredibly affected. A great disillusion, an immense discouragement, weighed upon me. I discovered that I had dreamed, that I had hoped, that I had taken an enormous interest in that idiotic man, there, with his absurd moral problem. And this thing, this sudden finale, staggered me, seemed wanton and cruel as the torturing of a little child. I was speechless.

After a while he said, very calmly, very firmly: "Courtland, I want to see her, once more. No, there won't be any scene. I won't come near; I won't be seen. But I must see her, once more. Take me up there."

I seized his arm and we climbed the stairs. We came to the threshold of the big reception room. I stood there a moment, dazed by the lights, the play of colour. Then I made her out in the centre. He had been quicker than I, for I had felt his fingers sink convulsively into my arm.

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She was standing within a circle of bowing, smiling men—a gracious, girlish figure, with magnificent dark eyes. She was evidently a little bored—not bored: lonely. Unconsciously her eyes wandered from the curvetting bipeds in front, in search of something, some warmer, more intimate sympathy, toward a knot of black-garbed men conversing seriously in a corner—the official group, I decided, right away. Perhaps one of these appealing glances reached it, for it broke; a tall figure stalked across the room toward her. It was the Big Man—you could tell it from the sudden illumination of her whole being. She looked up, girlish, admiring. He looked down, protectingly. I heard Dickson panting behind me.

A horrid, racking feeling took possession of me, a mad, monstrous desire to laugh, laugh insanely, in maniac shrieks, to shout and slap my thighs, stamp my feet, scream, scandalise——

The Professor, standing beneath the centre candelabra, bent his head paternally over his young wife. The light poured down upon that head. And it was bald.

The muchacho, in a corner of the room, turned something with a sharp click. The lights went out, and the gray pallor of dawn floated in slowly by door

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and window. Courtland rose, walked to the rear door, opened it. We followed.

He was asleep upon the table. He slept there, his hands upon his head, his right cheek upon his arm. In the wan light his features showed relaxed, in infinite lassitude, as those of a child after crying; his mouth, a little open, let pass his breathing, equal and faint like a babe's—and once in a while he sighed, a sigh not deep, not peevish, not rebellious, but resigned, rather, patient, gently unhappy.

We left him there. It was the end; the gods had had their jest.

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VIII

THE COMING OF THE MAESTRA

AS the prao, its two wide outriggers spread out on each side like wings, its sail rising above straight and stiff like a backfin, skimmed over the whitecapped crests like a gigantic flying fish, the Maestro, his white suit gleaming in the sun, stood at the peak, erect and tense as a Viking of old. But he was madder than any Viking had ever been.

For three long days he had been on that prao, while it tacked and beat against a monsoon that was southern, although, according to the dictates of the almanac and the Maestro's own ardent desires, it should have been northern. For three days, trying to make Ilo-Ilo, thirty miles across the strait, the little craft, with its crew clinging like monkeys at the ends of the outriggers, had darted right and left like a startled and very dizzy gull, while from the rudimentary rudder, where sat the Maestro, there poured forth a stream of most piratical objurgations. Neither these spiritual pleas, however, nor the mad flurries of the flat-bottomed boat had prevailed against the wind's blustering stubbornness, and at length they

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had turned tail and run before it, and now the Maestro was looking upon a golden strip of beach and a curtain of coconut palms, behind which peeped the nipa roofs of his own little pueblo. In a few minutes more the prao, balanced upon a white curling swell, had slid its nose up upon the sand, and the Maestro, with a great leap, found himself at the identical spot from which, three days before, his heart a-pound with strange tumult, he had embarked, too impatient to wait for the lazy little steamer which offered regular, if slow, passage once a week.

"Damn!" said the Maestro, as his foot struck the sand. "Damn! a deuce of a bridegroom I make, I do!"

But Tolio, his muchacho, who had stayed behind in guard of the house, was running down the beach toward him, waving a dirty piece of paper. It was a telegram, transmitted by carrier from Bacolod, which was in cable communication with Ilo-Ilo. The Maestro read it quickly; then he re-read it aloud, pausing upon each word as if to sink its dread significance deep into his dazed brain.

"Have missed you in Ilo-Ilo. Am coming on tomorrow's steamer. Girlie."

Behind the Maestro a cast-up log was bleaching in the sun, and he sat down upon it very suddenly and limply, as if his bony carcass had turned to water.

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"Lordie," he murmured, "and the sky-pilot gone south!"

And truly the situation was a delicate one. For "Girlie" of the telegram was none other than Miss Florence Yeats, come ten thousand miles over the sea to wed him. He should have met her in Ilo-Ilo, where the whole American population had made gleeful preparations for the event; but his uncalculating impatience and the immoral conduct of the winds had foiled him in his attempted crossing of the straits from his own town in Negros; and now she was coming by the day's steamer—with the sky-pilot, otherwise Rev. David Houston, head of the United Protestant Missions of Negroes, who might have afforded a much-needed alternative, far, far away on an inspection tour to the southern stations of the island, and not likely to be back for a month.

So the Maestro remained on his log, inwardly tossed by a cyclone of contradictory feelings. He could but admire the splendid confidence of the girl, coming straight to him without a question after he had failed her, failed her in an appointment to be classed among those, well, of higher importance. At the same time it did seem to him that some kind person in Ilo-Ilo might have warned her of the fact that he was absolutely the only white man in his town, and at that neither a clergyman nor justice of the peace. He did

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not rise and go home, where he could have spent a very profitable hour changing his bedraggled garments and washing his salt-grimed face. The crisis was too near for that. The little wheezy teapot of a steamer, with its precious and disturbing freight, was due in anywhere from one to four hours; and he would not have missed the sight of its first smoky signal at the horizon for luxuries much more dazzling. So, joyful and unhappy, expectant and horrified, he sat there, while Jack, his little fox terrier, who had come down with Tolio, romped unappreciated between his legs. Out a few hundred yards from shore, planted upon a submerged sand bar, a long bamboo fish-corral screened the horizon; and the Maestro recited metally to himself the approach of the little steamer. The smoke would first appear at the lower end, then slowly would crawl along behind the high paling, slowly, very slowly, till finally the ship itself would burst into view past the upper end, and stand for shore. And then——

But it was a good hour before the Maestro finally rose to his feet. "Ah," he said, "here she comes."

Behind the fish-corral, at its lower end, a thin thread of vapour was mounting toward the sky. The Maestro's heart expanded queerly within his breast. But as he looked, behind the exasperating barrier a big yellow ring, as from some gigantic pipe, rose

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slowly, then another that broke through the first, and a third that enveloped them all in one ugly smother.

"Good golly," ejaculated the Maestro, "but the little kettle is steaming!"

And the smoke, beginning to crawl along the corral, ceased puffing up in rings; it rose in one dense, funnel-shaped cloud. "It's that soft Japanese coal," murmured the Maestro, "that darned Japanese coal!"

But with eyes staring ahead, as if hypnotised, he was walking down the beach. A ripple washed over his feet, then a curling comber splashed up to his knees; but he took another step, unconscious of the water now about his hips.

Suddenly he turned, and was running back up the beach toward a shed full of drying copra. He climbed one of the thick corner-posts to the roof. The nipa thatch gave beneath his weight, and it was changing ground with fierce plunging stride that he looked out to sea. But he was not high enough. The fish-corral still made inscrutable the mystery behind, and he could see only the smoke, now a sooty black, rising in heavy volutes to the green sky.

He slid down and paced the sand, trying to calm himself. But the smoke, ever more voluminous and threatening, allowed him no peace. He ran back farther up the shore to a coconut palm and tried to climb the lithe, slippery trunk. The notches cut by

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the monkey-like tuba-men were too far apart; the silvery bark was like a greased pole. Twice he went up some twenty feet, only to slip, fighting and clawing, clear back to the ground again. He tore off his shoes and started up again, cutting his feet, scratching and biting in a frenzy of impotent effort. He went up higher this time, and then the slender, elastic trunk began to sway back and forth gracefully, dizzying him, making it difficult merely to hold on; and with bitterness he realised that the northern monsoon was now on, the wind for which he had prayed in vain for three days. He could go no higher, and still he could not see what was happening behind that stolid barrier of bamboo poles out at sea, only the black threat of the smoke, now drifting south like a great piratical banner, and he slid back to the ground full of a terrible unsatiated curiosity.

He looked down at his feet, torn and bloody, at his disordered clothing, and noticed with strange, objective curiosity that his whole body was trembling as if palsy-stricken. "Oh, shucks," he said, pulling himself together; "I guess it's all right. It's that Japanese coal, that darned Japanese coal." He sat down upon the sand, trying to keep command over himself, but his hands, independently of his will, began wringing each other between his knees. And then he was up and running along the crazy, sagging wharf,

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his dog barking playfully at his heels. At the end he found a banca, a little, narrow dug-out, steadied with long outriggers. He sprang into it, cast off the rotten piece of rope, seized the only paddle, and shoved off with one big heave. He swirled the boat's nose around till it pointed at the upper end of the corral, then bent down to mad toil, slapping the water in vibrating rhythm. And as he strained, his whole strength in each stroke, his eyes, round with terrible curiosity, followed the smoke as it crawled slowly along the corral, blacker, denser, more significant every moment. For a while he was in the smooth water, in the shelter of the northern cape, but ahead he could see the monsoon tearing the liquid surface into white shreds. He bore up and was soon in the midst of it, the short waves pounding the flanks of the boat, the spray spitting spitefully into his eyes. He added a new frenzy to his efforts, and then he shot past the end of the fish-corral and saw.

Not a quarter of a mile away, the ship was coming toward him, and it was a phantom ship. Of the material thing, of the fabric of wood and iron, there showed nothing; but from what was about the height of the deck a cataract of smoke poured down the sides in opalescent plays of grays and blacks till it met the water and rebounded, banking up in rolling, shifting gauze about the ship-nucleus hidden within, while,

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above, the monsoon seized the vapour, shaping it with twists and whirls into a huge, flaccid, black hand suspended like a curse in the sky. A sudden great calmness came over the Maestro. Wavering from side to side, as if the craft itself were staggering beneath the horror of the thing, the whole phantasmagoric fabric was coming toward him; and with slow, deliberate stroke he paddled to meet it, his eyes searching for a clew of the conditions, his mind working to meet them. The air became vibrant with a low growl, split with explosive cracklings, and, in the inky smother at the bow, little red tongues flashed up and out. He twisted his canoe around till its nose pointed with the course of the approaching vessel and waited, keyed up to some last possible opportunity that must be met swiftly and unerringly. And then the steamer passed slowly above him. A cataract of smoke poured down upon him, a hot, furnace-breath whelmed him with its fevered exhalation; and he was paddling madly beneath the stern, peering into the trailing smoke. A more furious puff of the monsoon tore the thing to shreds, and then he saw the boat's population. They were clustered at the stern, hanging to poop-rail and rope and moulding and anchor chain and to each other, like a troop of panic-stricken apes at a river crossing, snarling and fighting for the safer positions. But on the deck behind them,

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apart in the spiritual retirement of higher nature and greater courage, was a slim, blue-garbed form. She was standing straight and proudly, her skirts, gathered in her left hand in a familiar movement, drawn close about her, away from that defiling moral puddle of humanity.

"Girlie!" he shouted, his whole being going out to her.

"Lad!" came back the answer, clear and true. She moved forward a step, her arms stretched gropingly before her.

"Jump! Jump! Jump!" he commanded. "Jump!"

She took another step and with unhesitating confidence leaped out into the void.

She disappeared beneath the water; he sent the banca ahead with two long strokes, and then she rose to the surface alongside. He leaned over and, passing both arms below hers, he let her float back to the stern of the boat. But before raising her he suddenly let go with his right arm, seized the paddle, and hit at the water a blow that struck some slimy, slippery body. Then with a great effort he raised her into the boat and laid her down gently. For a moment he did not look at her, but gazed behind, shuddering, at a sharp fin cutting the water behind in a circle.

When he turned to her she was standing, and the

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light of their eyes met in a spiritual caress. Slowly his arms spread out in an unconscious movement and with a little choking cry she threw herself upon him, hiding her face on his breast, while his arms closed about her. "I knew you would be there," she murmured. He clasped her a little closer, and they stood there on their crazy little craft, in the clash of waters, wrapped together into one being, the shudder of the past uniting them in the same thrill, the ecstasy of the present stealing through their veins like bubbling wine. A squall had the little boat in its grasp; it passed above in the upper layers of air with great sharp cries; the boat drifted madly down the coast and away from it; but they knew of no danger, knew only that they were in each other's arms, that the past was fading away from them like a gone and impotent nightmare. Vague and faint, a sound like the bursting of a paper bag came to his ears, and toward the shore he saw, with eyes that did not understand, incongruous objects falling from the sky—a twisted smokestack, half of a jolly-boat, a bucket, boards, a multitude of smaller shredded bits, and aperch on the reef was a shell of a ship, undecked, the blackened interior opened to the skies, pouring out a cone of black smoke. He held her closer, her eyes against his breast, and a palm-lined cape drifted past, hiding the thing from view, hiding the last

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vestige of what had happened, and they slid on into the illimitable sea, into the future of far horizons.

After a while she disengaged herself a bit and, toying with the middle button of her jacket, "You love me a whole lot, don't you?" she asked in a question that was not a question.

"Yes, little girl," he answered obediently.

There was another long silence and the boat drifted another two hundred yards.

"Oh, what a pretty dog!" she exclaimed, for her eyes had been wandering below his arms. "Is it yours?"

And then he became aware of Jack beneath the thwart, whining, with eye apologetic and tail conciliatory, in the warring impulses of friendliness and reserve. She stooped down with inviting gesture, and the pup, with a little yelp, leaped into her arms. The Maestro looked down upon them, a little jealousy in his approving smile. But the interruption had suddenly made him alive to the situation.

"Jehoshaphat!" he exclaimed, looking at the now distant shore, down which and away from which they were drifting at a rapid rate; "it's about time to pull in!"

But this very sane remark was not immediately followed by action. The Maestro was looking blankly at the bottom of the canoe where lay what once had been

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a paddle, but was now only a handle without blade. The memory of the manner in which this transformation had taken place sent his eyes back over the water behind, and a frown came on his face. Right and left, with a movement regular as that of a sentinel pacing his beat, a black fin like a butcher's cleaver was cutting the water.

"What's the matter, Lad?" asked the young lady, still stooping over the dog, and astonished at the silence. "Can't you find the oars?"

"Well, no; fact is—these boats have no oars."

"Oh," cried the bride, immediately interested by this picturesque fact, and rising to her feet; "don't they have any oars? How do you make them go?"

"Paddle them, usually," answered the groom ruefully.

Her eyes fell upon the lamentable remains of the lone paddle, and suddenly the air was athrill with a joyous laughing peal.

"Oh, how jolly!" she exclaimed. "We're shipwrecked, aren't we? We'll go away out in the ocean, won't we? Isn't this a land of adventure, though!"

"Well, rather," said the Maestro dryly.

And, there being nothing else to do, he sat down at the bottom of the boat and drew her to his knees. She, with feminine altruism, completed the chain by tak-

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ing Jack upon hers, and they drifted on upon the flashing sea. "It's just delicious," murmured the bride, feeling the warm tropical sun drying her clothes upon her. But the groom did not chime in. He was thinking.

There was no immediate danger in the situation, but the prospects for the future were hardly to be termed "delicious." The monsoon that, probably aided by the tide-current, was sweeping them on, had not yet kicked up much of a sea and seemed to be abating in strength; and the little banca, buoyant like a cork upon its outriggers, rode the waves with cheerful alacrity. The spray that now and then dashed upon them was blood-warm and occasioned no discomfort, and their wet clothes were fairly steaming under the rays of the tropical sun. Still they were drifting steadily, with the island of Panay some thirty miles to their right, Negros to their left, its shores, diverging from their course, farther and farther away. They might drift on thus between the islands without touching either of them for days, till out into the China Sea, though the lack of food made even that undelightful alternative but a vague one. As for the chances of meeting a vessel, they were slighter still, only a few lorchas plying between the islands at long intervals. And then there was the grim diagnosis of the being with the fin, swimming

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back and forth, back and forth, behind the boat, with ominous patience.

"If we're shipwrecked, we ought to be doing something," said the bride suddenly, in the tone of one announcing the concluding clause of a syllogism.

"That's right," acquiesced the Maestro; "we ought to do something."

"We should empanel a jury," said the bride briskly.

"Empanel a jury," repeated the Maestro, somewhat dazed.

"Oh," said the bride, blushing, "I mean a jury-rudder. We should empanel a jury-rudder."

"You mean rig up a jury-rudder," exclaimed the Maestro, a flashing light of understanding in his eyes; "rig is the more nautical term."

"Oh, yes," cried the bride delightedly; "that's it; we must rig up a jury-rudder!"

"Well," said the Maestro, after a moment's thought; "jury-rudders, you know, are rigged up when the real rudder has been carried away. But we never had a real rudder; therefore we can't very well have a jury one."

"Oh," said the bride, disappointed.

She was silent a moment; then inspiration again flamed up.

"We should signal a ship," she said decidedly.

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"Signal a ship," repeated the Maestro, looking about him idiotically.

"Yes," said the bride; "put up the flag upside down in sign of distress."

"But we have no flag," said the groom hopelessly.

"Use my kerchief," said the bride resourcefully.

"Upside down?" queried the Maestro. "But there is no mast."

"Put up an oar," she said bravely.

"But there is no oar."

"Oh," she said, again discouraged.

There was another thoughtful silence; but she was not to be overwhelmed.

"We must get food," she said; "we must fish."

"That's right," chimed the Maestro resolutely; "we must fish. Have you any hooks?"

"I have pins," she said.

"I have string," he said.

He fumbled through his pockets and drew two pieces of sorry twine. She turned her back upon him, worked mysteriously at her garments, and handed him five pins. "Bend them into hooks," she said.

He kneeled down and, after pricking his fingers several times, succeeded in bending two pins against the thwart. He passed them through the ends of the twine, and they were the possessors of two fishing lines.

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"You fish in front and I'll fish in back," she said; "that way we won't catch the same fish."

"No," said the Maestro, looking behind at the water where the black fin seemed playfully trying to cut its initials; "you fish at the bow and I'll fish at the stern."

They took their respective positions and cast conscientiously. Jack, interested, began to run from one to the other, barking. "S-s-s-h," hissed the Maestro; "you'll scare the fish!" But the warning evidently came too late; the fish refused to bite.

"I'm lonely," finally said a voice at the bow; "come here and talk to me while I fish."

The Maestro dropped his tackle with suspicious alacrity and went forward. The bride continued casting with a gradual diminuendo of enthusiasm.

"I don't think this is much fun, do you?" she pouted. "Let's stop."

So they sat down again, she on his knees, Jack in her arms. The wind was going down, the sun was less scorching, and it was pleasant and quiet. To the left the palm-lined shore showed farther and farther away; and they were still drifting in the grip of some stubborn current. Suddenly she was laughing, a quiet, self-contained peal at some pleasant thought hers only.

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"It's dinner time," she said between two musical ripples.

"But you didn't catch any fish," he said.

She laughed again. "Bring me my grip," she ordered. And she pointed to a little dripping satchel, to which, with the tenacity of unconsciousness, she had clung throughout the crisis, and which now lay, unheeded, at the bottom of the boat.

He handed it to her; but when they went to open it, they found it locked, and she had lost the key.

He brought his knife out of his pocket and opened the blade.

"Oh, my poor grip," she exclaimed in dismay. But he slashed at it unsentimentally.

The interior was only slightly wet. Through the gaping hole she took a white lace kerchief and spread it upon the centre thwart. Again her hand went into the grip and successively she drew a little bottle of olives, four figs, three crackers, and a diminutive flask of milk. She arranged them daintily upon the cloth and then, sitting at the bottom of the boat with the table between them, face to face, they gaily dined together.

"Oh, I've eaten so much," she sighed at last as she presented the last fig to Jack, who gulped it down trustingly. "I think I should have a nap, don't you?"

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He took her up in his arms as a child and cradled her, but she did not sleep right away. Out in the China Sea ahead, the sun was setting in gloomy splendour. They watched it till it was only a puddle of blood upon the waters; and then darkness dropped like a leaden curtain upon the shimmering sea. From all sides the horizon drew near in black walls across which the heat-lightning wrote in rageful zigzags. The wind had gone down still more and little waves slapped up against the sides of the boat like caresses. A great loneliness, half sweet, half bitter, descended upon them.

"I'm a little afraid, Lad," she murmured. Jack began to whine and she took him up; then, cuddling closer, she went asleep. And the little boat drifted on in the illimitable darkness, the girl and the dog asleep, and the man awake with care and tenderness, while behind a phosphorescence streaked back and forth, back and forth, in ceaseless vigil.

Toward midnight he saw a light far to the left, fixed as if on shore, and he began shouting over the water. This awakened the girl and she joined her melodious halloo to his cries, while Jack barked wildly. But there came no response, and after a while they stopped and went back to their first position. Later, a sudden creaking in the silence startled him, and not a hundred feet away a lorcha was passing like a

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shadow, all sails set wing-and-wing, the helm lashed, with no man on the watch. Again he shouted and the voice of the girl and the bark of the dog joined him; but again there was no response, and slowly, like some enchanted fabric, the vessel melted into the darkness ahead. Then again the girl went asleep in his arms, the dog upon her knees, while he watched in the night and the silence, a great tenderness at his heart.

Later he must have gone asleep, for, when stirred by a murmur in his ear and a caress on his brow, he looked up into her eyes, the sky above was all green and rose with the dawn, and Jack was yelping madly at the bow. He started to get up but she detained him.

"No, sir; you mustn't look," she said; "I have a surprise for you." She placed her hands over his eyes and turned his head as he rose to his knees. "Now look!" she exclaimed, suddenly freeing him. And his eyes opened upon a line of coconut palms, with a golden thread of beach at their feet, not a hundred feet away.

He sprang out into the shallow water and pulled the boat up on shore. The sun was rising and they lay down on the sand, thawing their limbs, stiffened by the heavy night-dew, while Jack ran up and down the shore, barking at the rippling waves. It was a

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balmy morning; before them stretched the sea, a smooth shimmering gray sheet, with vague palpitations of darker hues; from behind came the scented exhalation of the land—and the mad barks of the dog, precipitated one upon the other, filled the air with a wild tumult of joy. A sweet lethargy stole through their veins; the problems of their existence, of their whereabouts, of food and shelter, of their return to his town were things for the future, for a far, remote, hazy future; the present had them in its enchantment.

After a while a little brown boy, a net over his shoulder, came singing down the beach. At the sight of the two strangers he turned and ran, but the Maestro was up and after him and had him in his strong arms before he could reach the shelter of the cocoanuts. A few words in his own patois and the soft voice of the white lady reassured the little savage, and he led them along a trail through the trees to a small barrio of tuba-gatherers. At the door of one of the huts the urchin's mother, an immense fat crone, greeted them. They climbed the rickety bamboo ladder into the dwelling and accepted the seat of honour, a sagging bamboo bench, while with many pitying exclamations at their plight, the rotund lady busied herself and stirred up a most abominable smoke upon her cooking platform. When the repast was ready it

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was seen to consist of two eggs and a banana swimming in suspicious grease, but the visitors were not fastidious. Meanwhile the boy outside climbed a tall palm, and soon the glade was resounding with the whacks of bolos and the crash of coconuts tumbling to the ground. They drank the milk and ate the white meat and gently refused some atrociously fermented tuba pressed ardently to their lips. All this time the Maestro was busy with his questions and he found that they were on Negros, some thirty miles south of their town, with Bago, a large village, where they would be able to secure a carabao and cart, only a few miles away.

So, as soon as was compatible with the somewhat deliberate Filipino courtesy, they started toward Bago, the whole population of the barrio watching them disappear through the trees. They soon struck the road and swung upon it. The sun, still low, dealt gently with the new arrival, and the country was beautiful. To their left the flashing-green rice-fields sloped toward the sea, and the shimmering waters showed here and there through the curtain of palms. To their right the high sugar cane, serried and plumed, throbbing mysteriously with small animal life, walled the view. They were somewhat dilapidated. The Maestro was barefooted and hatless, and his once-white suit hung lamentably upon his frame; the girl's

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hair had come loose and fell like a golden cataract down her back; but their hearts were purring with ineffable joy and everything was good. Hand in hand they strode along like children, stopping here and there to pick a flower and gaze into each other's eyes, while Jack raced madly, now in front, now behind them.

After a while a horseman came into view down the golden ribbon of road, riding toward them. As he neared he showed as a white-jacketed cork-helmeted Caucasian upon a diminutive native pony. The Maestro was gazing intently at the approaching figure. Suddenly he stopped short, his mouth open in astonishment.

"Well, I'll be danged," he exclaimed, "if it isn't the sky-pilot!"

"The sky-pilot?" asked the girl, astonished by this strange demonstration.

"Sure," corroborated the Maestro; "that's Huston, the missionary."

"The missionary!" ejaculated the young lady. She turned toward the Maestro; the Maestro turned toward her, and their eyes met. A slight blush rose to her cheeks.

"What luck!" cried the Maestro fervently. "Here, you sit down there," he said, pointing to a little mound by the side of the road. And not wait-

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ing to see if his invitation had been accepted, he rushed ahead toward the horseman.

The little pony was pulled up short, and the girl, sitting down with her eyes rigidly ahead, caught snatches of an animated conversation. Finally the missionary dismounted and the two men came toward her.

"Are you willing?" asked the missionary, as he stood, hat off, before her after the introduction. He was a young man, clean-shaven, very different from her preconceived idea of his kind, and there was a little gleam of fun in his blue eyes.

"Well——" she hesitated and looked intently at the tip of her foot, peeping beyond the bottom of her skirt. A cricket in the cane burst out in a shrill laugh. She raised her head and plunged her eyes steadily into those of the amused inquisitioner.

"I'm always willing to do what Lad wishes," she said, placing her hand upon the Maestro's shoulder.

They moved beneath the shade of a bamboo thicket, and the missionary, standing before the boy and the girl, the bridle of his pony passed around his arm, read words out of a little book that he had taken from his saddlebag.

But before he had gone very far, the Maestro began to fumble at his jacket. With some difficulty he drew from some inward recess a little buckskin

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bag, and when the missionary, hesitating, stopped in the middle of a passage, the Maestro nodded his head encouragingly. "Go on; it's all right," he said, and he passed something that glittered upon the ring-finger of the girl.

"Whom God hath united let no man part," said the missionary. He closed his book, stepped forward, and kissed the girl on the forehead.

"That was well done," said the Maestro. And he also kissed the girl, but not on the forehead.

They stood together for a while, speaking in absent-minded tones, the missionary of his missions, the Maestro of his schools, and then the Maestro and the girl started on again toward Bago. But Huston did not mount right away. He stood looking at them as they walked along the road, side by side, as they were to be through life, the dog frisking gleefully at their heels. They came to a turn in the highway and with a sudden joyous skip they vanished behind the cane, hand in hand like children.

Huston rose slowly into his saddle. "Come on, little horse," he said kindly; "come on; we're not in this."

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IX

CAYBIGAN

WHEN Sergeant Blount's detachment marched into San Juan, and in the centre of the plaza grounded arms with a crash that ran along the stone flagging in vibrating menace, the little pueblo cowered in a completeness of fear and abject surrender never reached before. Like lizards a few brown beings here and there slid out of sight; and the big blue-shirted men, grouped there beneath the white sunlight, found themselves as in a vacuum of heat and silence. But they had an uneasy sensation of eyes, eyes timorous and hostile, shifting and malevolent, from behind closed shutters and torn nipa walls peering upon them in tremulous distrust. In her stall at the head of the street, Eustefania, hundred-year-old, wrinkled, black, toothless, was hastily gathering up her store—two mangoes, a cluster of bananas, a dozen rice cakes, five twine-wrapped cheroots—into her pañuelo with trembling hands. And Pedro Lasco, crouching upon the stone steps of the church, a cigarette between his fingers, found his simple and complex soul filled with a new and inexplicable tumult.

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For from the man standing there at the head of the little troop there radiated Mastery. Pedro, in his blind, dark way, tried to analyse the impression, to find how this particular being differed from other tall, gaunt, brutal Americans that he had met in the past, before whom he had quailed physically, but never morally; but immediately he was submerged in that feeling he so hated—of confusion, blackness, bewilderment—which invariably seized him whenever he, man of a primitive race, sought to penetrate his own soul, obscure with complications beyond his power to read. This alone he could tell:—that this man, among his six-footers, towered by half a head, that his shoulders were broad, that his hair was golden like that of the Santa Madre seen once, long ago, in the cathedral at Lipa. Later, by patience of eye and obstinacy of contemplation he discovered other facts:—that the campaign hat of the Sergeant was wider-brimmed and more rakishly set than those of his fellow; that his belt hung down loose along the right thigh, to the weight of a huge, silver-mounted six-shooter which was not the regulation Colt's; that, when he walked, his feet tinkled with long, rotary spurs, and that a red bandana, knotted negligently about the neck, flamed up the blue and khaki with splendour.

The men stood at ease in the centre of the plaza.

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The Sergeant took from his breast pocket a cake of tobacco, bit off a piece with a slight swagger, then looked about him carefully. His eyes met those of Pedro. "Alica, caybigan—come here, friend!" he shouted with cavalier amicability.

"Caybigan—friend!" The obscure emotions in Pedro's breast surged suddenly into something almost definite, something big and soft that was sweet and compelled. Slowly he came down the steps in feline grace of movement and stood gravely before the big man, one foot slightly in front of the other, his right hand upon his pliable waist. The Sergeant looked down upon him, pulling at his blonde mustache. He smiled. The smile passed over Pedro in a shadow of indefinite discomfort; unconsciously he stiffened up, a little defiant.

"You take us to the best house here, caybigan," said the Sergeant.

The smile had gone, and that other sensation, of sweetness and good will, again possessed Pedro. "Opo," he answered simply.

And this was the beginning of the bond. Pedro showed the Sergeant the house best suited for cuartel, the natural spot for a horse-corral, the watering place at the river. That night, after he had been dismissed and had eaten his rice and fish, Pedro squatted long upon the bamboo floor of his little hut, pondering in

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his rudimentary way over the day's events. It was a poor hut, small, astonishingly bare; for Pedro's wealth was below, beneath the high, post-elevated floor. There, laid crosswise upon sustaining poles, were his hunting spears, harpoons, and paddles; keel-up upon the ground his banca, long, sharp-prowed, reptilian, and, hanging from post to post in heavy folds, ensilvered with fish-scales, his great drag-net. But his mind was not upon his riches; what he tried to read within him was dark and shifting; this only he could draw plainly from it:—a passionate desire to serve that big, golden-haired man with the jingling spurs, the red bandana, the rakish sombrero, to serve, blindly, unquestioning, like a dog, with fatigue of body, and outpouring of sweat, and tongue-licking of boots. But even this feeling was not clear like a simple flame; athwart it there leaped a contradictory shadow. The smile; it was the smile. Pedro tried to consider it squarely, but that bewilder-ment which possessed him always when he attempted to read his soul, complicated with complications of which he had not the key, seized him with acute dis-tress; and with an impatient gesture he brushed away the obsession, as he would a fly buzzing importunately before his eyes. He lingered long upon the clearer impulse, the idea of service, of devotion. "Caybi-gan," he murmured softly; "caybigan"—and in the

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balmy silence of the night the drawled syllables hung long with lingering sweetness.

Early the next morning he was about the cuartel, and when the Sergeant emerged, splendid in the rising sun, he was standing before him, alert of body, grave of eyes. "Hello, caybigan," shouted the Sergeant gaily; "going to help me, eh?" He pulled at his golden moustache; he smiled. A vague discomfort possessed Pedro; unconsciously he drew back one step in deer-like movement. But as the smile disappeared and the Sergeant stood there, pensive with the day's plans, the impulse to serve this being, to toil, suffer for him, again swelled within his heart in choking longing. They were together all that day. Pedro took the Sergeant over the whole pueblo, pointed out the natural points of defense, of vulnerability, showed him where the outposts should be placed, took him to the ford, circled wide about the huddle of huts, discovering all the hidden trails radiating out to the plains, the hills, toward the lairs of the Insurrectos.

"Good-night, caybigan," said the Sergeant as they parted that evening.

"Paalan, caybigan," answered Pedro.

All day he had longed to slip that word "caybigan," and now he stood still a moment, tremulous like a wild thing, noting the effect. But the Sergeant seemed to accept. He turned on his heel

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with a gesture of the hand and tinkled into the cuartel, while Pedro sped to his hut, his heart in tumult. There he squatted long in the anguish of obscure analysis. It was the smile again, that almost imperceptible twitch of the corners of the mouth which the Sergeant had always as he looked down upon Pedro. Pedro tried to picture it there, in the darkness; but it eluded him mockingly, vivid before him for the time of a spark, then gone before he could pounce upon it, seize it in interpretation. It was a torturing game.

That day was only the first passed in a service that as time went on, grew increasingly closer, more exacting from the one, more sacrificing from the other. It was in the midst of the Bell campaign. Dragging the country like a net, there marched ceaselessly large bodies of men. Behind them nipa roared; black volutes of smoke rose heavily to the sky, broke against the turquoise lid and, rebounding, filled the air with acrid haze. At night the horizon glowed as with phosphorescence; great, scorched trees threw their thousand arms in hysterical gesture to a lurid heaven. The country took on a bleached, tortured, convulsive aspect. The rivers ran pink with the blood of slaughtered cattle. And night and day, along the highways, the awed populations passed, women with babies astride their hips, upon their heads pañuelos knotted

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about a few handfuls of rice; men limp-armed, empty-handed; barefooted they pattered along the roads in thousands, toward the reconcentration camps, noiseless, speechless, stupefied, sullen-eyed and half mad. But up in the hills grim Malvar, starving, still hung on; though some of his men began to trickle down, famished, enfevered, without volition, sucked down by the void of desolation made about them.

And the great cry, reiterated incessantly from headquarters, athrill in men's mouths, on telegraph and telephone, was a ceaseless "Get the guns; get the guns; get the guns!" And the soldiery, wild with powder, fire, and carnage; that great cry ringing in their enfevered brains like a hallucination, "got guns" by deeds which, in their rare, cooler moments, came back to them as incredible nightmares. It was in this work that Sergeant Blount, athirst for praise and splendour of fame, threw himself with his ferocious energy and that Pedro proved the invaluable helpmate. He had been a great hunter; he could track like an Apache; and to this he united a singular faculty for obtaining information among his people. To the two caybigans the slightest starting point sufficed—a rumour, for instance, that a man with a gun had passed a certain place at a certain time. Instantly they had saddled and were off, and from the

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spot Pedro trailed like a hound, leaping from sign to sign. Often the trail led into the bosom of the hills and regretfully they had to stop before the probability of disappearing into an insurrecto stronghold. But often also the trail, circling, doubled back to one of the few pueblos, such as San Juan, kept here and there like oases in the desert of desolation, as baits, as constant, hypnotising promise of ease, of rest, of plenty to the outlaws starving, desperate, in the hills. And then Pedro's more subtle faculty came to the fore. He questioned, threatened, cajoled, bluffed, pleaded, leaped from induction to induction, till he had settled upon the man, the treacherous "amigo" in league with the enemy. Sometimes even there Pedro's persuasive powers were enough; more often Blount then began to act—and there were scenes better left undescribed. So, little by little, the cuartel filled with a strange captured arsenal, and Blount's soul with satisfaction. Sometimes it was a Mauser, oiled, polished, pretty as a toy; more often a rusty Remington or German needle-gun; but also there were pathetic makeshifts—a piece of water-pipe tied to a rough-hewn block of wood, loaded by the muzzle and set off by the hot butt of a cigarette.

So Pedro rode, slept, ate, toiled with the Sergeant, and by the whole pueblo, soldier and native, he was called "Caybigan"; by all except Eustefania,

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crouching day after day like a mahogany sculpture upon the latticed floor of her little tienda. The old woman was jealous. One day when the soldiers, in wild hilarity, had seized upon her basket of embryo ducks cooked in the shell and were hurling them at each others' heads, Blount had interfered. And now, whenever he passed, splendid, along the street, the old woman, like a statue coming to life, descended tremulously from her pedestal and, running in front of him, bowed low and tried to kiss his hand.

And yet in this service, in this renunciation, Pedro did not find the complete satisfaction that he craved. A heavy uneasiness was with him always, in rest or work, in peace or peril; a dull irritation, an obscure anguish that he could not fathom, but which each day became more oppressive, more insistent. It was the smile of his caybigan. At night he faced the distress of mental analysis, hour after hour, contemplating fixedly that smile. In its presence a strange weakness, a subtle debility, possessed him; to resist this he dwelt upon his past achievements. He had been a great hunter of hill and water. At the deer runs he was always leading *ginete*, galloped madly after the tremulous game, hour after hour, over mountain, down precipice, till he had worn it down, rode flank to flank with it and, seizing the moment, plunged his long lance into the throbbing

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spot behind the shoulder. And once when a *caiman* had snatched his goat off the bank of the river, he had plunged into the black pool; seeking the saurian into the oozy depths where sullenly it lay like a rock upon its prey, he had twined about it his big net and, springing back to the surface, with his friends had triumphantly dragged it out to earth. Loud had been sung his praises during the fiesta that followed, while the viscous thief, corralled with bamboo poles, both eyes gouged out, died slowly beneath the sun, upon the baking strand. Yes, he was a big man; even his caybigan, with hair of gold and tinkling spurs, could he have done better? But before the smile, malign there in the dark, all this, all these deeds, this valour seemed bleached of colour and meaning. A heavy discouragement weighed upon him.

One night, at last, he came to a conclusion. And it expressed itself in one word, short and electric.

"Patay!" he said; "patay—kill!"

He would kill the smile.

He climbed down the bamboo ladder and, beneath the floor, went directly to the big net, hanging from post to post. From one of the flaccid folds he drew an object. In three leaps he was up again, and in the faint light of his little tin lamp, for a while he acted like a child with a doll. He crouched down, the thing upon his knee, spoke to it with tender ac-

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cent, stroked it with long, gentle caress. But it was not a doll; it was a gun, a dainty Mauser carbine. It was oiled and polished, and beautiful, but he spent two hours over it, cleaning, oiling, snapping the delicate machinery. Then, with a sigh of satisfaction, he went down again and laid the precious toy among the secretive folds of the net.

The following evening, as in the moonlight the Sergeant rode out to inspect the outposts, a shot rang near and a bullet wailed overhead. Pedro, through the bush screening him, saw the great horse shy and rear, saw the Sergeant's graceful, almost lazy recover. Then man and beast stood still, black, statuesque in the sheen of moon, the horse with ears cocked forward, trembling beneath the compelling reining hand, the man erect and proud on the high-pommelled saddle. There was a silence long as infinity. The horse champed resoundingly at the heavy Mexican bit. Pedro panted. Slowly the Sergeant turned his head, from the thicket to the right, to the golden ribbon of road ahead, then smoothly, in imperceptible movement, to the left. His eyes were upon Pedro; they seemed to pierce the screen of brush to halt penetratingly upon the assassin. And upon the face, clear in the moonlight, appeared the smile.

A sense of immense helplessness whelmed Pedro; he crouched lower; his hands, flaccid, dropped their

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hold upon the gun which sank softly in the high cogon. There was a long, throbbing silence. Then the tinkle of spur rang out in silvery note. With an elastic bound the horse leaped forward, immediately to be checked by the powerful guiding hand; and slowly they moved down the moonlit road, horse and man, huge, black, granite-hewn—unconquerable.

But Pedro, sneaking back, low behind the thicket, pressed both hands to his breast as if to hold there the germ of an idea he felt within; and with feverish haste hiding his gun, he crouched down at his accustomed place to face it. It was a dolorous process. The thing sparked, flamed, wavered, went out completely, sparked anew. He contemplated it fixedly, encouraged it, fanned it; and finally for a moment it blazed, vivid, calm, unforgettable.

"Alipusta!" he shouted triumphantly; "alipusta —contempt!" "Alipusta," he repeated slowly, contemplatively, the triumph of discovery sinking into the ashes of realisation. Yes, that was it; it was contempt, that smile, the smile of his caybigan; contempt, thorough, tranquil, absolute.

II

During the following days, Pedro worked with renewed frenzy. There was some rumour of the presence of an Insurrecto camp near the pueblo some-

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where. Pedro went about the taos, cajoled, threatened, flattered, begged, cross-questioned, menaced in the full exercise of his singular gift, progressing from rumour to probability, from probability to certainty, and then he searched the country like a hound, along subterranean trails, springing from trace to trace, hour after hour closer. But all the time he shot sly side glances at his big caybigan, in ambush for the smile, the smile of contempt which, as he worked more and more feverishly, nearer and nearer success, came to the Sergeant's lips with growing frequency, with less and less restraint, with increasing insolence. And at his heart a desire gnawed, a black, obscure desire for something, something—he could not tell what—something he could not determine, but which now was indispensable to him, without which he could not live; something that tasted like water to his thirst, but was not water. He wished no more to kill; the new longing overwhelmed the other more primitive impulse. It was something bigger, grander, more magnificent; it tore at his bowels, a want, vague, unnamable, but of corrosive violence. On the third day they located the camp; travelling sinuously along a trace of trail they saw at last, through the bamboo thicket, the pointed roof of the Insurrecto cuartel—a nipa hut in the centre of a clearing. They stopped a moment in consultation; then Pedro slid smoothly

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through the cogon toward the camp. Half-an-hour later he was back, sprang up suddenly as from the earth at the feet of the Sergeant.

"Tacbo—gone," he said.

The Sergeant was accustomed to such disappointments. Tilting back his wide-brimmed sombrero in philosophical gesture, he followed Pedro toward the clearing. But as they broke out of the thicket he gripped his guide's arm with iron fingers and with a bound threw himself back into cover. For before the hut human figures sprawled in feigned sleep, their guns stacked behind them, and at the windows shadowy forms lurked. "What the devil——" he began fiercely.

"Tacbo," reiterated Pedro; "manicâ—dolls," he added shortly.

The Sergeant understood, and with a swaggering clink of spurs stepped out again. It was as Pedro had said. The recumbent figures upon the ground were dummies of grass and cloth; the stacked guns were rough wooden counterfeits. They climbed the bamboo ladder into the house. More of the grotesque shapes were there, legs divergent and back-jointed; two leaned at the window, their hollow bellies bent at right angles over the sill, in solemn, peering attitudes. In the breeze their loose white camisas moved softly in undulating shivers; their big straw hats

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flapped like wings of bats. Hanging from the central rafter was a lamp, smouldering in yellow spark and sooty smoke; and against the harsh downpour of clear sunlight outside this little, soiled flame gave to the whole crew of contorted bodies an aspect of death, of carnage, of decay. The Sergeant caught himself sniffing the air. "Let's get out of this," he said.

They climbed down the rude stairs again, and instinct, more than Pedro's guidance, took the Sergeant to the right, some fifty yards into the bush—and there it was, the trench:—parallel to the trail, broad, deep, and all littered with signs of recent occupancy.

The Sergeant stood still, looking at the hut, at the trench, at the trail. He twirled his moustache pensively; muttered exclamations came to his lips.

It was a pretty arrangement. A detachment, coming along the trail behind the guides and bursting out into this clearing, with its lure of men recumbent upon the ground, of stacked arms, of vague forms at the windows, shadowed forth by the lamplight behind, would immediately charge in attempted surprise. Then from the brush to the right, the trench's enfilading murder—it was pretty indeed.

Again the Sergeant took in all the details, his head turning from point to point, from the hut to the trail, from the trail to the trench, then back again, assur-

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ing himself of the perfection of the plan. And Pedro looked at the Sergeant; as if hypnotised he stepped closer, in long, feline strides, coming suddenly at far intervals, his whole lithe body a-quiver. For there, in the eyes of the Sergeant, the caybigan, growing stronger, clearer, more certain every moment, there it shone, his Desire, the form and shape at last of his obscure torturing desire. It was that—that which shone in the eyes of the Sergeant as he contemplated the perfection of the plot—it was that he longed for, thirsted for, that which he must have himself, absolutely, to guard and treasure and cherish. It was there, the torturing want of his entrails, there, but not his, not his yet.

Back in his hut that night, after hours of obscure battling, he named it at last. "Magtaca," he said, with heavy finality; "magtaca—admiration."

And then instantly he leaped to the next step.

"For the enemy, magtaca; for the caybigan, alipusta."

He hissed out the last word like an expectoration.

Yes, that was it:—for the enemy, admiration; for him, the friend, the servitor, the caybigan, contempt.

Pedro slid down to the big net below. And long in the dim light of his little lamp he oiled and cleaned and polished and caressed.

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III

A mysterious enemy began to vex the little detachment of San Juan with the puerile attacks.

Every night a Mauser bullet came wailing down the Lipa road and passed over the outpost with a resounding hiss. The first time this occurred, the lone sentinel, returning the fire, doubled back prudently upon the guard rushing out to his support. Tense in vigilance the little troops waited for the attack. But it did not come. At regular intervals a lone bullet screeched above their heads, and that was all. Finally they charged along the highway. A few more detached shots met them; then there was silence.

The following night the same thing took place—the wail of the lone bullet, the alarm, the pursuit—and nothing.

A new plan was tried. Four men were placed at the outpost with saddled horses within reach. At the humming approach of the first shot they leaped into their saddles and thundered down the highway; it stretched before them, moon-golden between the black thickets, and deserted. Returning they scouted the brush, the big horses crashing down the thick vegetation. But there was nothing.

A corps of native beaters was added the next night. They searched the bush thoroughly on both sides of

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the road. The shrill katydids dropped into silence; lizards, snakes, iguanas, loathsome beasts of obscurity rustled off in panic. But that was all.

Caybigan was called to the rescue. For two days he worked upon the inhabitants of the pueblo. But for once his wonderful faculty failed him; he found no trace of the secret enemy.

An ambush was prepared. Ten men at early dawn lay down in the bush near the spot from which it was calculated the bullets came. All day they lay there, low, without a whisper, without a movement. But when night came, it was the other outpost, at the opposite extremity of the pueblo, which was attacked.

After this last effort the thing was accepted as routine. There was a childishness, a puerility about it that made the men smile. They grew rather to like this little excitement, breaking the monotony of long vigils.

But gradually the affair grew more interesting. The man was learning to shoot. Each night the leaden missile screeched a little lower, a little closer. Finally, one night, the guard, when relieved, was found walking his post with his left arm limp along his side, neatly punctured by one of the mysterious bullets.

On the same morning, Blount, walking along the main street, was stopped by old Eustefania.

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"Mi capitan," she said, cringing before him, "do you wish to know who shoots your soldiers at night?"

"Who?" asked the Sergeant curtly.

"Caybigan," she said.

From the depths of their caves her eyes glowed at him, fixed, violent.

And to the Sergeant the answer came as the revelation of something long and obscurely felt. Caybigan's absence from the night alarms, his singular failure to track down the sharpshooter, the ridiculous fiasco of the attempted ambuscade—a thousand and one little links suddenly clinked shut at the word in a chain of evidence, of certainty.

The Sergeant turned sharp on his heel; his spurs rang on the stone flagging. In the centre of the plaza Caybigan, in his graceful, elastic pose, half-confident, half-wild, was bandying with three of the blue-shirted soldiers. Blount made straight for the group. When near he began to run, his face convulsed with the rage, half real, half assumed, which experience had taught him invaluable for such moments. With a tiger leap he bore upon Pedro, clutched his throat with his great hands, and threw him to the ground.

Pedro went down without a quiver of resistance, and he lay there a white figure in the gray dust, his arms thrown out in a cross-like attitude of infinite

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surrender. His brown eyes looked up into the cold green light of the Sergeant's with golden luminosity; he smiled gently. "And this from my caybigan," he said.

"None of your Julius Cæsar on me," snarled the Sergeant, who had a vague acquaintance with the classics. "Your gun; where is it?"

"I have no gun, caybigan."

The Sergeant drew his revolver, and brutally he jammed the handle into the mouth of the prostrate man with a sharp twist that sent the pointed stock up against the palate, jerking the lower jaw down in distorted gap. "Water," he said shortly.

One of the men with whom Pedro had been talking brought a hollow bamboo full of water. Holding it above the prone figure he tilted it carefully. A silvery cascade poured down; it struck the distended nostrils in diamond rebound, streamed into the cavities at each side of the clamped revolver. Immediately Pedro was clutched by an agonising sensation of drowning. He gasped, gurgled; his knees, as if automatically, snapped up to his chin. And the water came down, calmly, steadily, in pretty silver flow, while he drowned, drowned, drowned.

"Wait a moment," said the Sergeant. The man with the tube gave it a slight tilt, the flow ceased. Slowly Pedro emerged from the torturing sensa-

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tion; an immense weakness dissolved his bones; he trembled.

"Your gun," snarled the Sergeant, shaking him ragefully.

But Pedro, limp, eyes closed, waited for a little strength.

"Your gun," thundered the Sergeant.

And Pedro opened his eyes with a long sigh, like a very sleepy child. "I have no gun, caybigan," he said, very gently, very wearily.

They began again. The water slid down in silver prettiness, splashed upon the face in diamond drops; and Pedro drowned. And each time when they stopped, and he had regained strength, he smiled gently at his caybigan and said, "I have no gun, caybigan."

After a while fury rose like a red foam into the brains of these men, mad with ceaseless, ineffectual carnage, with bitter, unavailing toil, with the sense of their impotence in this eternal war against a vacuum. They threw themselves upon that limp, resistless body, shell of the impalpable soul unconquered within. They beat and kicked and choked.

But Pedro, very weak, very tired, very broken, still smiled gently and said, "I have no gun, caybigan."

Then from this orgy of violence Blount felt himself slowly emerge, white of face, cold in sweat, stagger-

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ing as if drunk. He snapped up Pedro into his arms and laid him in the shade of a giant mango growing out of the ruins of a crumbled wall near by. An immense discouragement, a poignant disgust made him tremble as with bodily weariness. Down on one knee he bent over Pedro. Pedro felt the warm breath like a caress on his ear. "Caybigan," implored the Sergeant; "caybigan, amigo, friend, tell us, go on, tell us where you keep that gun, tell it to me, for me, for my sake."

Pedro opened his eyes, and they smiled, golden, at the Sergeant.

"I have——" he began.

"No, not that, not that," cried the Sergeant, in frenzied fear of hearing again that answer which maddened him, blurred his brain with red haze. "Tell me, come, tell me; whisper it, low, right there, in my ear; come, caybigan."

"If I tell you, then will we be friends?" asked Pedro wistfully.

"Caybigan," said the Sergeant, "we have worked together, eaten together, hunted together. We are friends. I don't want to hurt you, sure I don't. Tell me, tell me—and I'll love you like a son—like a little, foolish son," he added with sudden access of tenderness.

"Well," began Pedro; "the gun, it is——"

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But his eyes, fixed upon the Sergeant, froze suddenly as if before an apparition. The Sergeant was smiling, smiling the smile of yore, the unconscious smile of contempt, fatal, invincible.

"Go on; go on!" whispered the Sergeant breathlessly.

"I have no gun, caybigan," said Pedro monotonously.

The Sergeant sprang to his feet, livid. "Come on, fellows!" he shouted; "we'll hang him!"

They got a rope, noosed it about Pedro's neck, threw the loose end over a projecting branch of the mango and, standing him upon a box, secured it.

In that position they left him for five minutes, to let Fear seep into his stubborn heart. Every minute, in cold, tense accents, the Sergeant asked, "Where is the gun?"

Pedro did not answer. He stood there, very still, calling to himself all the strength left in his miserable racked body, composing himself as for some great and splendid sacrament. Then, as for the fifth time the question was asked, his right arm shot up towards the mountains, dark in the distance.

"Malvar is over there with ten thousand men," he shouted with high, clear voice. "Viva Malvar; the Americans are sons of curs!"

Somebody kicked the box.

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But as, the whole earth lurching beneath him, he plunged into the Infinite abyss, he took with him a wild, tumultuous, and exquisite joy. For at his last words of defiance, upon the face of his golden-haired caybigan he had seen—fluttering uncertain at first like the heralding colours of the dawn, then glowing clear, certain, resplendent—the expression he had caught at the lone cuartel in the bosque, the look of esteem, of admiration, full, unreserved, complete, for which he had thirsted so agonizingly, and which now at last had come to him, his beyond the power of Man to take away, at the paltry price of treachery and torture and death.

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X

THE CAPTURE OF PAPA GATO

THIS is to explain how young Theodore Pinney, after his meteoric début in the P. I. constabulary—consisting in nothing less than the capture of Papa Gato, fierce *bandelero*, who for years had terrorised the region of the Taal—squatted into a fat civilian job and forsook all dreams of glory. And it's not at all about young Pinney, but mostly about his mother, the widow.

"The widow;"—by that short, somewhat ominous and not too respectful cognomen she was known by all the bureau—the educational, of course—from superintendent to lowest clerk; and throughout the archipelago by men departmental and non-departmental. This name, based on fact, like most things based on fact, was a lying thing. Close your eyes and say "widow"; the vision is of something subtle, arch and tantalising—lustrous eyes, comely form (somewhat pudgy), kittenish ways. But she was long and lean and angular; her bosom was arid and her tongue triple-forked. "Old-maid" would

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have expressed her infinitely better; but there was the fact, the stubborn fact, which manifested itself with slight provocation by a grim tightening of the thin lips, and the phrase—proverbial now throughout the P. I.'s—" Mr. Pinney, well, the less said about him the better. He was a *handsome* man, but he was a *wicked* man "—the " handsome " being pronounced with a rising inflection, and the antithetic adjective with a drop into tenebrous basso-profundo.

Of Pinney *père* this is all we ever knew, although in departmental circles he was a subject fertile of delicious speculation. That to be wicked he had had ample temptation, knowing the widow, we cheerfully granted; but what chance he ever had had to succumb, knowing the widow, we could not imagine. Of Pinney *fils* we knew still less, nothing at all, in fact, what little there was being the property of the postal authorities and consisting of records of money orders sent monthly by the widow to a well known western college town. But of the widow herself, good Lord, we knew only too much.

For she was a terror and a pest. From the day she placed her number tens upon Philippine soil the islands knew no peace. The educational department became a nightmare, and clamour filled all the others. She had a passion for " little trips "—and her will was adamant and her tongue a visitation. They all

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knew her. Her appearance at the Civil Hospital heralded the disappearance of the resident chief. "Give her what she wants, anything she wants," he yelled at his clerk, as he exited. And when she sallied out for fresh conquest she held under her arm a certificate of ill-health. At the educational bureau the superintendent saw her coming. Out he sprang, through door or window. "Give her what she wants," his parting wail floated to the clerk. And so, with a glance at the medical certificate, and a few timid questions as a matter of form, he made out Document No. II—sick-leave on full pay. A few minutes later the major of the army transport service found the outer world urgently calling, and as he dodged the widow on the stairway, "My clerk, madam, has orders to give you what you wish," he murmured, tense with an immense hurry. And the clerk provided; and a few days later the widow wandered aboard some inter-island transport, made law to the quartermaster, terrorised the steward, possessed herself of the best cabin, anchored her chair in the most desirable deck space—and off she sailed on one of her adorable little voyages. From Aparri to Bohol, through Vigan, Ilo-Ilo, Cebu, Dumaguete, and Zamboangua, she was known, her clamour had resounded, for transportation, for commissary privileges, for bull-carts, cargadores, and military escorts.

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One day, though, she decided to settle down.

She caught the superintendent at his desk and asked him for a provincial post. The superintendent saw his main chance staring him in the face. He was an intelligent and discreet man, so he did not decide hastily. For a whole afternoon he pored diligently over a map of the archipelago. Finally he settled on Taal, in the volcanic region of Luzon. It was just at the end of the dry season; he calculated that she could just get there. Then the rains would begin—and the roads were without bottom. Besides, there was Papa Gato ambuscaded somewhere upon the flanks of the great volcano surmounting the pueblo. Many things can happen in six months. The superintendent was not an imaginative man; but that day he certainly smiled to visions.

So, with a last array of *reclamas*—transportation, carts, provisions, military escorts—the widow, her worldly goods upon a carabao-drawn carro, herself in a shaky quilesa, set out toward her Palestine. And the rains began and shut her off behind their impenetrable curtain.

From her isolation, after a while, news began to filter, vague, insufficient, broken, like the irritating snatches of a telegraph line out of order; first the regular official reports, secondly popular rumour. She had evidently taken hold. The monthly reports

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showed the school attendance of Taal rising by leaps and bounds to astonishing totals. Rumour, however, corrected in some degree the superintendent's satisfaction. It appeared that this remarkable increase was largely due to her personal herding of *batas* with the aid of a big *baston.* Once, it seemed, she made a regrettable slip, took one of the leading citizens of the pueblo for a little boy, and, he proving recalcitrant, cracked his crown with her persuader ere she had discovered her mistake. This caused some trouble to the central office, but, as the superintendent remarked to the Secretary of Education, "One cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs, and he (the leading citizen, evidently) was a bad one, anyway." Pompously couched recriminations, also, came from the Taal municipality. It was claimed that she had taken upon herself the collection of taxes, that she levied thereon five per cent. for school purposes, that she had deposed the treasurer and had appointed one of her own, who happened to be her muchacho, so that the books and funds were securely locked up in her stout camphor-wood chest. But as the town officials were suspected of sundry peculations, the new system was regarded as somewhat of an improvement. Besides, at that time she was absolutely invaluable with a contribution to *The Philippine Teacher* (the superintendent's special hobby) upon the "Model Nipa

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Home," an article embellished with diagrams and elevations and cross-sections. A few weeks later, it is true, there came from Mr. Rued, a constabulary second-class inspector, stationed in Taal, a most virulent protest about the burning of some two hundred shacks that happened to conform only too distantly with the ideal " Model Nipa Home." Mr. Rued, being a mild man, thought this method of civic improvement too strenuous. With this, his chief in Manila thoroughly agreed, and, leaving him full discretion as to methods, ordered him to take all necessary measures—which command, mysteriously enough, remained forever without answer.

It was just about this time that Papa Gato, living in idyllic ease in his impenetrable bosques up the sides of the Taal, began to feel that vague but imperious self-dissatisfaction which is the peculiar appanage of us unfortunate humans—the inward command to work. The Mexican pesos of his last raid were becoming deplorably few, his store of palay was low, and the contributions of the villagers spoke of failing memories. It was time for another raid.

But this time, with his more earthy preoccupations there mingled blue-hazed dreams. Gato, in spite of a real practical genius, often proven by the ingenuity of his methods of extracting from recalcitrants information as to the whereabouts of their hid-

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den wealth, Papa Gato was sentimental. Even before the revolution, whose impassioned call had led him into a mode of life from which he had never been able to free himself, even when a humble cochero in Manila, he had been a dreamer. And now, Pope spiritually—this for the benefit of the rural population, but treated by his own camp followers with large, American-imported winks—king administratively, Marescal de Campo militarily, this deplorable trait was still with him. The life of an outlaw, even in the Philippines, has its disadvantages. Gato's particular disadvantage, which he now set himself to nullify, was this: he had never seen an American woman. He had never seen one of those golden-haired *maestras*, which the American nation (with that inconsistency which prompts them to shoot—alternately and with equal firmness, precision, and dispatch—lead and book learning into his people) sends to far pueblos like angelic visitations. But there was one in Taal. He had heard that she was wonderful (it speaks eloquently of his sentimentalism that he had never sought to find out in what she was wonderful; his imagination immediately made her so in the mode that he would have her so—stately, golden-haired and seraphic). So it was that Taal was chosen as the field of his next exploit.

With his usual courteous foresight, he sent into

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the town an announcement of his intention to capture the treasury and the *maestra*. This was his regular mode of procedure, and not so fatuous as it may appear. It had the double effect of warning his friends —he had many in all places—and of paralysing his enemies. This time, however, he was surprised with an official answer from the municipal council, sitting in executive session. This answer was three varas long and redundant with rhetoric; but reduced to plain and precise English it might well be set down thus:

"For God's sake, take her away, and you can have the money, too."

This alacrity seemed to him highly suspicious, so, with strategic cunning, he decided to hold camp with his main force, and to send off his brigadier-general, Gomez, with a force of two lieutenant-generals, five colonels, ten majors, twenty captains, and a few lieutenants for the more facile work in Taal.

II

Thus it was that, soon after, the good people of Taal were aroused at sun-up by a ragged burst of musketry, a hullaballoo of yells and beating tom-toms, and the crackling of burning nipa. They were prepared for such a contingency, however; and when, after this little preliminary demonstration, Gomez's

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disreputables burst along the main street, they met a reception that halted them in uneasy distrust.

For out of all the houses, humble *balay* or grand *casa*, the populace was pouring holiday-decked, faces shining with welcome—man, woman, and child, tao and distinguido, all ranks, all sexes, all ages. White linen, shimmering jusis, diaphanous piñas united in fiesta colouring. Peace and rejoicing, a mild, ecstatic expectation, reigned upon all the faces; the niños and niñas especially were full of a goatlike hilarity and tumbled on the green amid the tulisanes, upsetting majors and colonels indiscriminately. And—could it be—was he blind?—no, it was true, indubitably true; before Gomez's eyes, in front of the Casa Popular and spanning the main street, a graceful bamboo arch of triumph rose against the pink dawn. And across the top, in six-foot letters of bejuca, was the following inscription:

TO THE LIBERATOR OF THE PUEBLO—THE INHABITANTS OF GRATEFUL TAAL.

But out of the Casa Popular the municipal band was emerging in joyful blare, and Gomez had just time to compose himself into the pose of his new rôle before he was greeted by the presidente, dressed in church-day black, his head covered with the derby of

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ceremony. After a short exchange of courtesies, the band wheeled, the presidente placed himself at its head, Gomez at the head of his own troops, and presidente, band, tulisanes, and populace started down the street. "To the maestra!" shouted the presidente, with a heroic gesture. "To the maestra!" echoed Gomez. "To the maestra!" roared the tulisanes. "To the maestra!" yelled the populace, squeaked the women, piped the niños and niñas. And pell-mell they flowed beneath the arch.

Before the original Model Nipa Home the band halted and with an ominous snort came to silence. A hush fell over the assembled multitude. One of the shutters of the Model Home slid back; a lean, yellow arm, at the end of which dangled a steaming coffee-pot, pushed out of the opening. Suddenly the coffee-pot parabolaed through the air and landed upon the presidente's ceremonial derby.

"Caramba!" roared that official, suffocated and scalded; and he beat a hasty retreat into the hoi-polloi. The mysterious arm mysteriously disappeared. Forming a cordon of lieutenants about the Model Home, Gomez and three of his colonels mounted the stairs and beat down the light bamboo door.

But behind the door stood the formidable widow. Long and gaunt, in her morning wrapper, her befrilled nightcap askew upon her head, her horn

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spectacles trembling with indignation at the end of her aquiline nose, she confronted them, a figure of righteous fury. Behind her was a well-constructed pyramid of utensils, from which she drew with promptness and discernment. In a jiffy the nearest colonel was helmeted down to the chin with a big iron kettle, the second was sneezing to death under a stream of tabasco sauce, while Gomez himself was retreating beneath the tom-tom din of an empty coal-oil can, plied with vigorous repetition upon his cranium.

Right here, however, the widow was led off into a common enough strategic mistake. Instead of turning her victorious energy upon the vacillating troop outside, she allowed herself to be hypnotised by the already thoroughly conquered. At the head of the stairs, pirouetting madly and roaring like a bull, was the be-kettled colonel, and upon him she turned her batteries. It was a wonderful exhibition. Things culinary flew through the air—three saucepans, a rolling-pin, a grill, a teapot, a pile of tin plates. Then came canned goods: tomatoes, pears, peaches; beef, roast and corned; mutton, chicken, hare, pork, peas, maize, string beans; jellies: apple, currant, lemon, cherry; jams: apricot, peach, grape, plum, lychee. Two hams and a small sack of flour came as an interregnum. Blind, deaf, helpless, the poor colonel

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swayed, doubled up, whirred, thrashed his arms beneath the avalanche. Resonant whang-angs of his headgear announced particularly brilliant shots; dull thuds more vital ones. At last, with a parting shower of little potted cheeses, the widow's ammunition ran out. She folded her arms, drew herself up to her full height, and, her eyes shining humorously beneath her shaggy brows, "Well, boys," she asked, "what is it you want?"

Gomez was coming up the stairs again, under safe escort.

"We are ladrones, madam," he explained, politely. "We want—we want——" he stammered, uneasy, before that great dominating figure. "We want—ah—the dinero, the money——" he stopped, then with a vague apologetic shrug of his shoulders: "the dinero, and you."

"Ah?" sang the widow, sardonically, "you want me, do you?"

Gomez hesitated. He was not at all sure about that. But his orders were imperative.

"Papa Gato wants you," he said, with more precision.

"Ah—it's your papa wants me, is it? Very well——" her lips tightened into a line ominously straight—"he shall have me; oh, yes, indeed!"

Thus it was that an hour later the widow, erect

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and tense in a carro drawn by a pacific carabao, surrounded by an escort of tulisanes with the grave and preoccupied air of people bearing a case of dynamite, followed by the holiday-decked populace and the delirious blare and roar of the band, passed along the main street, by the Casa Popular, beneath the triumphal arch, to the outskirts of the pueblo, and on into the open country.

The band, marking time with the populace on the edge of the town, which they were not to leave, was playing "Hail the Deliverer, Hail!"

III

Long and in detail will Major General Gomez remember (he has now ample leisure for such exercises of memory between the four walls of a place called Bilibid) that march back to camp. And his bringing it to a successful termination will always stand as his most serious claim to military glory.

It was not that the train was cumbersome. It consisted, in fact, only of three carros, the first one containing the widow, the second the camphor-wood chest, inside of which was the town treasury, and the third, Mr. Rued, second-class inspector Philippine constabulary—a roaring mad inspector, it might be added, and tied up like a sausage. He had been sur-

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prised in bed; the ignominy of his taking was deep in his soul, and found vent in a stream of expressions Biblical and strenuous and not at all complimentary to his captors.

No, the widow was the matter.

It was that curious performance of Mr. Rued which caused the first outbreak. After listening meditatively for some ten minutes, the widow suddenly realised that here was something highly improper.

"Colonel," she cried, rising in her cart like a jack-in-the-box, "you will please place more distance between me and that blasphemous person yonder."

There was a pause in the procession. New intervals were tried. But the widow's carabao was slow, and the inspector's, possibly impressed by the fervent soliloquy going on behind him, persisted in coming up within earshot.

"Captain, I refuse to continue under the present conditions," ultimatumed the widow. And, springing out of her cart, she squatted resolutely in the centre of the road and refused to budge.

A happy inspiration came to Gomez. He appealed to the inspector's chivalry.

The inspector was cooling a bit by this time, and he was a man of some intelligence.

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" You cut that rope that holds me like a chicken," he said, " and I'll parleyvoo."

Gomez cut the rope, and the inspector agreed to keep his feelings unexpressed.

The procession moved on. The carabaos laboured, the carros creaked and groaned and wailed. The sun mounted, more biting every moment. The ladrones lit cigarettes and shuffled along the road. The widow dozed.

A more pronounced lurch of her cart suddenly awakened her, and again her clamour was resounding in the heated silence.

Again it was the unlucky inspector. His cart had crept up little by little, till close to the widow's, and her eyes had opened upon the fact that he was not properly clad. Now, such a thing at times is excusable. It isn't your fault if a band of pestiferous ladrones pounce upon you in the morning and whisk you out in your pajamas.

" Sergeant," shrilled the widow (with concern Gomez noticed that each time she addressed him it was with a diminution of title). " Sergeant, dress that man! "

Gomez demurred. Again the widow sprang from her cart and sat in the road. Again the train was blocked.

" I will not budge till you have clothed that man,"

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the widow declared. "I insist upon a pair of trousers."

There was a hurried questioning of the band, a general denegation, and Gomez returned, discouraged.

"Señora, no hay pantalones," he announced.

"Give him one of your own men's," she commanded briefly.

Again the troop, drawn up in line, was questioned, but still more vehement were the denegations. It was not that they needed them so much for covering, those precious pantaloons; they were full of holes and covered little; but they were all more or less be-striped, and the men very properly refused to part with their insignia of rank. The inspector, also, was interested. After a careful inspection, a horror at the thought of placing against his skin such garments as were displayed before him made his hair rise on end. Diplomatically he suggested to the widow that a transfer would only add to the shame of the situation, for it would leave one of the ladrones with nothing on at all, while he, at least—

But he had pronounced his own doom. "I'll fix you," said the widow briefly. Untying the bundle of clothes she carried, she drew out a skirt, a short khaki walking-skirt, and after an insufficient smoothing

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of creases with the palm of her hand, she threw it at Gomez. "Put that on him, my man," she said.

But the inspector protested. He, too, got down from his cart and squatted upon the road. And there they sat in the middle of the road, each behind his cart, the military man and the school-teacher, in a grim, silent battle of wills. And there was little hope of either ever yielding, for, really, they were not especially interested in the progress of the caravan. Gomez was, and at length he lost patience. There was a terrific struggle, twenty colonels bit the dust beneath the sledge-hammering of the desperate inspector's fist; but numbers prevailed at last, and again Mr. Rued was in his cart, trussed up like a pig for the market, and, flaccid about his legs, the unspeakable garment. But his cart had to be left far in the rear, for he evidently considered himself released from his former promise.

And the procession moved on. There were minor obstacles. Once, the widow lost her glove and the command had to scatter back upon the road for a full half-hour of microscopic search till she found that it had miraculously caught on the axle of her cart. At the barrio where they stopped for the mid-day rest, she sent back six distinct messes of eggs to the presidente's kitchen and finally invaded it herself, till the muchachos, beneath the severity of her

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eyes, had evolved some turnovers satisfactory to her esthetic soul. And little by little, her bitter will was imposing itself more heavily upon the column. Colonels became muchachos and generals valets. When they stopped that night at Talisay, the best house of the pueblo was placed at her disposal; the presidente hustled at her orders, the kitchen was in panic, the household terrorised. Somewhat softened by her undeniable success, she sent for the inspector, who was brought to her, betrussed and beskirted. The long ride in the sun with his elbows together upon his spine had weakened him somewhat, and his remonstrances had sunk to unintelligible mumblings. Graciously she cut off his cords, and as he stood swaying before her, "Well," she said; "aren't you ashamed of yourself, young man? Think of your mother; how would she have felt had she heard you a while ago——"

A last spark of defiance flared in the indomitable man. "My mother wasn't an old-maid she-cat," he muttered. But instinctively, in spite of his courage, his voice had sunk too low to be heard.

"I have a son," began the widow, again. "He——"

"Lordie, but I'd like to see the little nincompoop!" said the inspector.

But the widow was unshakable in her good humour.

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She ordered a room prepared for Mr. Rued, and later sent him a cup of tea of her own brew, which he promptly threw into the face of the astonished muchacho.

They started again at sun-up. They left the road and filed along a narrow and steep trail. The widow insisted upon a chaise. One was improvised out of bamboo; and thus, as the shadows of night crept up the flanks of Taal, she made her triumphal entry into camp upon the shoulders of the four strongest colonels.

Papa Gato had watched the procession winding up to him through the high fern, but as it neared a sudden timidity sent him back to his hut. Gomez found him there, in great indecision, alternately twirling his little moustache and rearranging upon his breast the seventeen medals he had decreed upon himself for extraordinary valour.

"Greetings!" he said, with a forced air of decision. "Have you been successful?"

Gomez took off his sombrero and mopped his brow. "I have her—and the dinero—and a constabulary inspector," he answered evasively.

"And she is here!" whispered Gato with emotion. "I suppose I should go greet her."

"Sure!" said Gomez detachedly; "go on to her; I am tired, I'll wait here."

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And throwing himself upon the cot, he turned his face to the wall.

But as his chief left the cabin, he sprang up like one possessed, rushed to the door and peered maliciously outside.

Indistinct in the gloaming, a feminine form could be descried, regally erect, upon the high-borne chaise. Gato approached with beating heart.

"Do not fear, señorita; we shall not harm you," he said softly. "You are our guest; the house is yours——"

He was very near now.

"The house is yours, and——"

There was a sudden movement of the enigmatic figure upon the chaise. A furious slap sent his sombrero whirling to the ground.

"You boorish little boy, you," rasped the voice of the widow; "you little brute! What do you mean, *what* do you mean by standing with your hat on, before an American lady!"

IV

"Gomez," said Papa Gato disconsolately; "Gomez, I can't stand it any longer!"

This was in the commandante's hut, during the burning hours of the siesta, and ten days after the arrival of the widow. Gato and Gomez were lying

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stomachs down upon a petate in attitudes of limp discouragement.

"It's pretty bad," murmured Gomez meditatively.

"We're up against it," went on Gato (all this took place in Tagalog, but is translated into equivalent English).

"We sure are," echoed Gomez sombrely.

There was a long, pained silence.

"Gomez," whined Gato, "I haven't a pulgada of authority left!"

"You certainly haven't," said Gomez, a certain appreciation brightening his manner.

"And you have less!" went on Gato.

"The she-cat!" spit out Gomez, all appreciation gone.

"She bosses the camp!"

"She sure does."

"We have to eat at tables now."

"With forks."

"And say grace."

"With our faces in our plates."

"We have school every day," went on Gato, sinking deeper and deeper into despair.

"*Do* we; well, I guess! 'Do you ssee dde hhett? Yiss, I ssee dde hhett. How menny hhetts do you ssee? I ssee ttin hhetts. Oh, look at de moon, she is shining up there. I loof de name of Wash-ing-ton,

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I loof my coon-tree, too'—ah, it makes me sick!" And Gomez spit upon the ground.

"Gomez, Gomez; we must do something!"

"Go ahead"—graciously.

"Gomez"—hopefully—"let's chop off her head!"

"You can't"—gloomily.

"Good Lord, Gomez; don't you think, with my best bolo, very well sharpened, if we hit hard, very hard, that maybe——"

"That's not it. Remember the speech she made to us the first day:

"'Keep that in your heathen minds. I'm an American woman, an American woman, remember! That means I am sacred, sacred! If you harm me, if you as much as touch one of my hairs——'"

"But she has only two or three, Gomez!"

"Don't interrupt me—'If you as much as touch one of my hairs, you know what will happen. The American soldiers will come after you. Not the scouts, not the constabulary, but the American soldiers. They will follow you like hounds, ten thousand, a hundred thousand of them, if necessary. They will never let you rest. They will avenge me—well, you know the American soldier, my friends. Don't get him mad. I am the American woman; I am sacred!'"

"But, Gomez; do you think that is all true?"

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"It is; I know."

"But, Gomez; the Americans, they are not fools. They can see. They must know that she is old like my grandmother, that she is seven feet tall, that she takes out her teeth at night, that——"

"It doesn't matter; she's an American woman."

"Ah, these Americans; what a singular people!"

A long contemplative silence.

"Gomez, Gomez"—with sudden inspiration—"let's poison her!"

"Now you're talking like a babe; there's the same objection."

"Oh!"—more silent despair.

"Gomez, let's take her back, back to Taal!"

"Umph—what do you think the Taal people would do to us?"

"Madre de Dios, Gomez, is there no way, none at all?"

"None I can see."

"Then let me die!"

But hope in human breast is indestructible. It was Gomez who, after all, found the solution.

"We'll take her to some other town, some town where she is not known, absolutely not known," he proposed in rapt accents.

"Bagum-Bagum!" exclaimed Gato, rising to his feet; "there's ten thousand pesos in the treasury!"

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"We'll raid the town and leave her there!"

"But say, there 're some constabulary there; do you know how many?"

"No, I don't know. But the constabulary inspector knows."

"She's freed him, too!"—Gato flew from the immediate consideration of practical things to a bitter recapitulation of wrongs. "He walks around the camp as if he owned it. And she gave him my best pantaloons, those with the gold stripes——"

"Never mind," said Gomez soothingly; "we'll question him to-morrow."

V

So it was that, upon getting up, a little later than usual, the next morning, the widow found the door of her hut locked from the outside. As has already appeared, the widow was a person of considerable executive ability. She wasted no time in idle recrimination, but promptly kicked, through the nipa wall, a hole out of which she emerged, fresh, vigorous, and unruffled.

An interesting scene met her interrogative eye. In the centre of the clearing a tripod had been constructed out of three great pieces of green bamboo. And even as she looked a man was tying a supple liana to the apex, while another worker tied a slip

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knot to the loose extremity. Then a little fire of twigs was started beneath.

"Umph," grunted the widow; "I wonder what these heathen think they're going to cook."

She was not left guessing long. Out of one of the huts, again bound hand and foot, Mr. Rued was being carried by six stalwarts. He was strangely silent. And his face was pale and tense. He was borne to the tripod; the loose end of the liana was passed in a slip knot around his body, a little below the waist, then—one, two, three—the carriers suddenly let go, and the inspector, dangling at the end of the liana, swung neatly, head downward, over the little fire.

Papa Gato sauntered up close, "And now, will you tell us how many men there are in Bagum-Bagum?" he asked suavely.

The inspector did not answer. His face was very red and his jaws were very salient. A few dry twigs were placed upon the fire, which sprang up, crackling. There was a faint smell of burning hair.

Something like a beskirted cyclone whirred into the circle. Biff—bang; two kicks scattered the little fire to the four winds. Zip—the liana was cut with a big jackknife, and the widow, gurgling and choking, was bending over the luckless Mr. Rued. "You poor dear," she gulped; "you poor baby"—and she

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pressed him to her arid bosom. "Here, water, you heathen, water!"

But the inspector, very much alive, was struggling to get loose; and her glance, falling upon Papa Gato, watching the strange performance with wonder-dilated eyes, suddenly changed the nature of her emotion. "You devil!" she shrieked, and she sprang to her feet; "You fiend!"—and she started toward him.

To Papa Gato's eternal credit be it said that he held his ground for several distinct seconds. But the vision of vengeance bearing down upon him was more than mortal man could bear. He broke one step, hesitated, then all his courage oozing out of him suddenly, he turned deliberately and ran. Once around the clearing he loped, the sound of flapping skirts ominous in his ears; then a second time, for the widow had picked up a stick, and with mechanical precision it was rising and falling only a few inches behind his head; a third lap he began, and by that time all the dogs of the camp had joined the chase in tumultuous glee. And it was a strange sight, up in that lonely clearing, surrounded on all sides by an impenetrable and poisonous vegetation, beneath the shadow of Taal, brooding and sinister with its black banner of vapours, in the hollow silence of high altitudes, that man running in sober earnest, with

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an immense concentration of his simple purpose, and behind him that incredible woman, flashing-eyed, hook-nosed, her garments to the wind, seemingly gliding over the high grass, a gigantic and fearful witch, riding a broomstick. In the centre, from a few dying embers, a little smoke rose, and about that were grouped the tulisanes, in frozen attitudes, like a bronze bas-relief, and they looked at their running chief, at the pursuing woman, without a gesture, without a cry, without the single flapping of an eyelid. And behind the nightmare couple ran the dogs, the curs of the camp, snarling and laughing and gurgling like a pack of hyenas.

To this preoccupation of man and dog may be ascribed the ensuing catastrophe. For suddenly, close, so close that the vibration of it could be felt, but muffled in the impenetrability of the jungle, a shot rang out. This was followed by a crepitating volley; a buzz of lead passed overhead. Silently, with a minimum of movement, the ladrones, as if at a preconceived signal, slid across the clearing and into the wilderness beyond. Just at that psychological moment, the widow caught up with Gato. Calmly, dexterously, as one spanks a child, she upset him, face down, and resolutely sat upon him. Then, readjusting her skirts about her limbs and her spectacles upon her nose, she grimly waited.

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Shouts came to her ears, a hewing and hacking of bushes, a crackling of bamboo. Vague brown spots appeared against the metallic green foliage; they massed, detached themselves and burst into the clearing—a detachment of constabulary. At their head, charging furiously, was a lieutenant, slender and boyish, in accoutrement ridiculously new. He was enjoying himself immensely. A fine ardour was in his face; his cap was off, his hair streaming in the wind; he held a naked sword extended up and forward in statuesque gesture. Across the clearing he came, straight as a bee; his eyes flashing, his nostrils distended, all athrill with military glory.

And suddenly he was nose to nose with the widow, who had slowly risen and now confronted him majestically, her foot upon the luckless Papa Gato. An extraordinary change came over the young warrior. His martial excitement, his keen zest, his bravado collapsed; his sword dropped till its point touched the ground; his flaming uniform took on cringing folds.

"Mamma!" he cried, a little wistfully.

"Boy," shouted the widow; "boy, what are you doing here! Quick, give me this"—she snatched the sword from his hand—"that also"—she whisked the revolver out of his holster. "Oh, that child, that child," she wailed. Out in the jungle there were cries,

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hollow and muffled in the crape of vegetation ; a few shots rang, dull as if underground. Three or four bullets whirred overhead.

"Down! Down!" cried the widow; "down, boy" —and her iron claw sank into his shoulder, bearing him down, and unresistingly he fell upon the luckless Gato. "That's right, sit on him," the widow whispered hoarsely; "and don't you move, don't you budge. My God, if only I can get you out of this——" She turned toward the jungle, straight to her full height, a strange, inflexible figure with the sabre in her right hand, the revolver in her left, a heroic figure, really, keeping guard there upon her boy, her son, her baby, her treasure in life; the object upon which had flowed all her wealth of love, of tenderness, leaving her, soul and body, arid and sterile and bitter and awesome.

In the depths toward which she peered with watchful eyes, a vague, mysterious tumult was taking place, lost, devoured in the brooding silence about it. It came in multitudinous attenuated noises, like a ventriloquist performance; murmurs rose from the ground at her feet, wails sighed overhead.

Her back to her son, tensely keeping guard, she was questioning feverishly.

"Oh, why did you come? How could you, how could you! Without telling me. This country is not

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fit for you. And the constabulary! How could you, how could you!"

He answered her as well as he could. Really, he would have preferred to be out there with his men in the jungle. But he was subjugated. The training of his childhood had fallen back upon him like an unshakable harness. So he remained, seated upon Papa Gato, answering hysterical questions.

Really, it was a pretty bit of coincidence—the young man, suddenly boiling with desire to do, leaving his college, taking a commission in the Philippine constabulary, arriving over the sea just in time to learn of his mother's capture, begging for a place in the rescuing party, then, in feverish impatience, distancing with his detachment all the others——

From the depths of the jungle, piercing above the muffled tumult, there came a great, clear cry. Then there was absolute silence. A fly buzzed about the group. A squad of constabulary men, soiled, bloody, and dishevelled, carrying a bound prisoner, broke into the clearing. Another—the affair was over.

The sword fell with a clang from the widow's hand; the revolver rolled after it; and then, stiffly, with extraordinary dignity, she slowly fell into the arms of her son. The widow had fainted.

But it was a weakness that was but momentary. By the time that civilisation was reached, she was

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again in possession of all her faculties. Thus it was that young Pinney sat down, and, beneath the rigid shadow of her dominating presence, filled out a blank form of resignation for the benefit of the chief in Manila; and thus it is that he now catches flies in the drowsy office of one of the "snap" departments, while the widow spanks young hopefuls in the Manila normal school.

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XI

THE MAÑANGETE [1]

FAR down the palm-lined road they appeared, nearing with perplexing rapidity. The head of my companion snapped forward and his eyes flamed. They came in a file down the road, between the palm trees, in the glowing tropic light, swinging along with smooth, resistless progress. They seemed to glide; the bamboo poles, balanced on their shoulders, slid as if on invisible tracks laid above the ground, and the tuba buckets at the ends were steady as if floating in the air. Soon they were near. The play of their great thigh muscles became visible. They turned the corner of the plaza with a new burst of speed, and then they passed us in magnificent action. Down their naked heels came in turn, pounding the ground; in one long, smooth sweep from waist to toe the legs flashed back in a quivering of ropy sinew. Their naked bronze busts glistening with sweat, and the supple back muscles, giving at each step beneath the

[1] Mañangete is a Negros Visayan dialect word, denominating the men who gather tuba. Tuba is the fermented sap of the coconut palm, obtained by incisions made at the top of the tree.

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bamboo poles, undulated liquidly beneath the golden skin. Through the palm leaves covering the buckets a slight froth played like silver lace. They passed us in a flash of gleaming bronze; the creak of the bamboo poles shrieked in our ears; the pungent, sulphurous odour of the tuba stung our nostrils, and then they vanished in the kaleidoscopic colour-play of the market.

My eyes fell upon my companion. He was leaning forward, his shrivelled legs collapsed beneath the trunk, his whole weight upon his hands, his head straining ahead like that of a bird in flight, and in his eyes something strange and moving—a soft, regretful gleam, yes—God bless me, how strange it seemed in that sullen, stolid cripple!—a look of longing, longing infinite.

From this day I watched him, watched him as the tuba-carriers flashed into the pueblo, at high noon.

He was about forty years old, and above the waist he was beautiful. From the belt the body shot upward, broadening like a Greek urn into a deep chest, and wide, massive shoulders. Beneath the gleaming terra-cotta skin the muscle played in elastic bundles of power. His face was hatchet-carved, with a relentless jaw and eagle nose, and his straight black hair was ennobled by a sprinkle of gray.

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But below the waist was ruin. He had been hamstrung. His legs were folded flaccidly beneath the trunk, the calf against the thigh—powerless things which, as he dragged himself on his hands, trailed limply behind as if some ignoble, useless attachment of the great body above.

It was not often that he courted this humiliation. Usually he was in his nipa hut in the coconuts, silent and alone. But regularly, a little before noon, he dragged himself to his station in front of the store of Gong Ah Deam, merchant and usurer, and there, leaning against the wall, he watched and waited for the coming of the mañangetes. There was something tragic about the man, a singular dignity of woe, and as he crouched there, that quality made him appear as tall as those about him. He never spoke, and an awe—partly superstitious, I think—kept a vacant circle around him.

One day that man told me his story. He told it to me in hoarse whispers, impelled by some torturing desire to unburden himself, in front of the store of Gong Ah Deam, there, awaiting the coming of the tuba-carriers.

"I was one of them, señor," he said, pointing with his chin toward the far vista where the tuba-men would presently appear; "I was a mañangete; yes,

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the strongest and fleetest of them. For five years I was the leader of the file. They would challenge me often at first. As we strained toward the far pueblo, in turn each would move up and try to pass me, but I only quickened a little as the man tugged at my side, his breath whistling like the wind through the coco trees, his legs stiffening till they cracked, till finally he dropped back, gasping, to the foot of the line, the tuba running down the sides of the bucket, while another spurted up to wrest from me the honour. After two years they ceased to challenge me—all except one. I was their acknowledged king —except by one. His name was Herrera. He was small and light and stringy. He had no chance against me. I could laugh and sing as he walked at my elbow, agonising with the effort. Day after day, as I raced proudly along, the long line behind me, the bamboo pole springing lightly on my shoulder, the tuba frothing in the buckets, I felt him start out of his place; soon his hot breath was on my neck, and out of the corner of my eye I saw his evil, yellow face. I hummed and sang and cracked my muscle with walking. And he hung on, I don't know how, señor, he hung on mile after mile, till I thought he would die. Then suddenly he reeled and sobbed, and inch by inch I passed him, proudly smiling, while his heart burst with bitterness. We rushed into the pu-

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eblo, and as I, raising my head, spurted with new speed, and each man, his eyes glued upon the back ahead, strained to keep up, I knew that he was last in the line, staggering blindly, his tuba spilling at every step, a disgraceful spectacle. And to my ears came the laughter of the women, pointing their fingers at him.

"They looked at me with longing eyes; they laughed at him. For I was strong and beautiful, señor. Look at these arms—they were a third bigger then. And my thighs—they are shrivelled and soft now, like meat that has hung in the market too long—but they were like the trunk of the iron tree, strong as the carabao's, fleet as the mountain deer's. And he was small and dried, and his legs were bowed.

"Señor, I knew why he challenged me thus day after day. He loved Constancia Torres. And I loved her, too.

"We had played together when children; we were youths and did not know it; one day I saw her come out of the bath and suddenly I was a man. Her dripping patadyon, wrapped high beneath her armpits, followed the curves of her body like a long caress; above, her shoulders glowed like polished gold, and over all there fell to her heels the glistening glory of her black hair. And her eyes were deep as the pools of the Cabancalan, and her voice was soft

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as the sigh of the breeze through the sugar cane at sundown, and I loved her, señor.

"Of course I won her. I went to her father one evening and asked for her and got her. She stood aside while I spoke; a corner of her camisa had slipped down from her left shoulder and the light shone on the golden skin. She did not smile when her father assented. Next day we were married by Padre Marcelino, and she did not smile.

"But I did not care, señor. It seemed such a little thing, her indifference, near my love. Señor, you have seen the hot breath of the monsoon pass over the land, day after day, month after month, till the palms and the bamboo and the sugar cane all bend its self-willed way. My love was the hot monsoon and she was the bamboo wisp.

"I took her away to my new nipa-hut, under the coconut palms. And I trembled to my own happiness as the violin vibrates to its own music.

"I could not sleep those days, señor, I was so happy. At sundown I climbed the tall coconut trees, my bolo between my teeth. I hacked at the shoots above and hung my buckets, and then slid down and found her. We stood long at the window, señor, in the night. The wind blew softly through the trees. Beneath the leaves the stars shone upon our love, and when the breeze ceased, so quiet was it, señor,

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that we could hear the gentle dripping of the tuba in the buckets, above us in the sky. And we would stay thus many hours of the night, señor, my arms about her, her soft body against mine, and it was only later that I remembered that all the caresses came from me.

"Señor, I was so happy, that I forgot to hate. The day after my marriage I let Herrera lead into the pueblo. The next day he was not in line, nor ever after. Señor, the man who forgets to hate is a fool.

"All about me there was a rippling of evil laughter, and winkings and signs and tappings of fingers on foreheads. And I was blind.

"One afternoon, late, as I was coming back to my hut, my empty buckets swinging on the pole, my eyes fixed upon the little nipa-roof already showing through the trees, and hunger of love in my heart, I tripped against a liana across the path. There was a whirr of pliable bamboo and something sharp whistled through the air and struck me there, behind the knee, with the sound of the butcher's cleaver cutting meat. I fell, and my legs were as they are now. Señor, you have fought in the war; you know the bamboo-trap. A bamboo-trap had been laid for me.

"My legs were gone, but something terrible

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whispered in my heart that I should be home. And I was there almost as quick as if I had been still a man, and not a worm.

"Señor, the house was deserted. As I crawled about like a dog smelling tracks, there was not a trace of the woman I loved.

"Then all that my eyes had refused to see, all that my ears had refused to hear poured into me in a black tide. I knew why the pueblo had laughed. And throwing myself on my back I shivered all night with pain and lust to kill."

The man suddenly leaned forward and his eyes flamed. The mañangetes were rushing into the town. Smoothly they glided around the plaza, and then they passed us in a flash of gleaming bronze. The creaking of the bamboo poles shrieked in our ears, the pungent sulphurous odour of the tuba bit our nostrils, and long with a wistful look the cripple followed them till they were lost in the palpitating colour-play of the market.

Four miles from Cabancalan there is a lonely pile of rocks of evil repute. Heavy, cannon-like reports come from it at times, and a sickening smell of sulphur pinches the nostrils a quarter of a mile away.

I was passing the place at noon one day when I

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saw a man crawling queerly among the rocks. His movements were so suspicious that I dismounted and followed him.

I gained fast and finally a full look as he passed around a big boulder intensified my surprise. It was the cripple of the pueblo, the old mañangete.

He was labouring heavily, dragging himself on his hands, his big chest wet with perspiration, and a glint of baneful determination in his eye. After a dolorous scramble through putrescent vegetation and leprous rocks, he slid down a little ravine into a cup-like depression bare of plant life except at the farther end, where a gigantic banyan embraced the earth with its huge tentacle roots.

He crawled to the middle of the clearing, and then he stopped, on his hands and knees, looking at something on the ground which I could not see. I waited for half an hour, but he remained thus in this strange posture and I silently crawled back and away.

The next morning, early, I was back at the place. I slid down the little ravine into the cup-like depression. It was deserted. A white object on the ground caught my eye. It was a human skull.

It was a human skull, white and polished with age. And its lower jaw was twisted in a most abominable grin.

I touched the thing to roll it over. It was fast. I

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felt beneath. The sharp, saw-like edge of vertebræ rasped my fingers. I dug the earth beneath. The vertebræ extended downward for a few inches and then the smooth collar bones crossed them at right angles.

I understood. An entire skeleton was there, buried upright to the neck. I thought I understood also the abominable grin.

I did not want to see any more; but as I turned away a whiteness among the octopus-like tentacles of the banyan compelled me.

I took a few steps and stood before a skeleton. It was tied upright to the banyan roots by an iron chain, corroded with rust. There was no flesh on the thing, but a stream of heavy black hair cascaded down from the skull to the heels, undulating in and out of the ribs.

One more thing I noticed. The hollow eyes of the skeleton among the banyan roots were focused upon the centre of the clearing. In the centre of the clearing was the skull of the horrible grin, and its staring orbits were turned upon the roots of the banyan tree.

For a moment I was too cold to climb out of the place. Yet when I succeeded my body was wet with perspiration.

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XII

THE PAST

THE coconut palms rose straight to heaven, bending pliably to the western breeze; their heads tapped gently against each other and a murmur of secrets sighed overhead. From the shifting shreds of sky the sun fell upon the sands in heavy gold spots. To the east, through the lithe, silver trunks, the vivid green of the rice fields flashed; to the west a tawny thread of beach banked up the rippling tide.

In the darkness of the recess a frail hut of nipa leaves and bamboo slowly shaped itself as I advanced, and suddenly a shrill voice, rasping as the violin note of the tyro, pierced the peace of the place. In the doorway, at the head of the cane ladder, old Marietta was gesticulating.

"Oh, señor," she called asthmatically; "pray come in; visit your humble servant. The house is yours, the tuba is fresh, and coconuts are in the trees."

"Not to-day, Marietta; not to-day," I called back, "I'm going on to Suay; I can't stop."

She threw her arms up in consternation. "To

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Suay, señor, to Suay? José-Maria! do you not see the baguio coming? Soon it will be upon you, the trees will bend, the coconuts will fall, and you will die!"

The typhoon of the Philippines is not to be disdained. A picture formed in my mind of falling trees, rent bridges, melted roads. I stopped, hesitating, looked up at the blue sky above, listened to the regular breath of the wind. "Nonsense!" I said, and just then a sudden gust screeched overhead; the coconuts bent in half circles, snapped back, bent again with weird elasticity. Before my mind could fairly seize them, before the impression of them could be more than hazy and faint as those of a dream, these manifestations ceased. The wind fell dead, the trees came back to equilibrium. A heavy torpor descended upon the land.

"I'll come in, Marietta," I decided, "and you'll tell me more of the Negritos in the hills."

She did not answer, but waited for me at the head of the bamboo ladder—a weird, dried-up mummy of a woman, with teeth corroded by the betel-nut, and eyes that flashed hard beneath the heavy, yellow folds of the lids—an old witch, fit for broomstick rides and the nightmares of children. Inside, I sat down upon the bench by the window while she squatted upon the bamboo-strip floor, a big cheroot tied up

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with hemp fibre in her mouth, a hollow coconut filled with tuba at her side. But she did not speak. A strange taciturnity was upon her; she sat there speechless, motionless, like some monstrous idol, her lids half-dropped over eyes that showed opaque and dead.

"Well, Marietta," I said at length; "what about that coconut milk you promised me?"

"Oh, señor, pardon me, pardon your servant. 'Tis the baguio. When I feel the baguio coming I forget; I think of other days."

She half rose, then sank again upon her heels, her mind refusing to stay with the present.

"For there were other days, señor," she said gently; "ah, yes, far other days!"

She rocked herself slowly to and fro, her face in her hands. Outside, the heavy torpor was suddenly torn by a shriek in the upper layers of air. A few great drops pattered resoundingly upon the nipa roof, then heat and silence reigned again, with the torment of the woman's soul.

Curiously I looked upon the old crone. She sat there rocking gently from side to side, her lips bubbling in meaningless mutters. Then her yellow paw crept down her arid bosom, fumbled beneath her camisa, and reappeared with something in it that flashed gold. She pressed it to her withered lips—and

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I saw that it was a locket—pressed it to her withered lips with a singular intensity of passion; pressed it there again and again—and that sudden flash of something long gone, of a spark, dying, perhaps, but which in that ruined body should have been long dead, moved me with uneasiness, as if I were watching, and a party to, a sacrilege.

But she dropped her hands upon her lap in a gesture of infinite hopelessness and she began to speak, to speak in a queer sing-song, a monotonous chant, like some religious recital of her Malay ancestors suddenly coming back to her through the ages.

"Ah, he was beautiful, señor; he was beautiful, he was beautiful, he was beautiful! He was tall and straight like the coco tree; his hair curled like the waves upon the sand, and his eyes were deep and soft like the pools of the Cabancalan. He came to me from over the seas, señor; from far-away Spain. I was standing on the beach, right over there. There were many boat-loads of soldiers landing, and he was on the foremost prao. It came straight to me, foaming with eagerness, its wings spread out like those of a butterfly, flying over the waves, and he stood at the bow. His cap was in his hand; the wind blew his hair of gold into a halo like that of the Christ of the Santa Iglesia; the sun beat down upon

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his white suit and he glistened like a god. Straight for the spot where I stood, señor; straight as your compass needle points to the north, the prao steered from afar, and not a palm's breadth either way did it turn as it foamed toward me. And when, heeling over like a wounded bird, it grounded in the shallows, and ten men jumped out into the water to carry him ashore, he motioned them off, sprang himself into the waves waist-deep, and impatiently, as a horse paws, he forced his way toward me. Then a fear entered my heart and I fled, fled back into the woods, to my hut, and threw myself upon the floor panting, panting and dreaming.

"I was not ugly, then, señor; ah, no, I was not ugly; age and sorrow had not yet knotted me like the roots of the banyan. I was Queen then, señor; the Queen of Beauty among my own people. At the procession it was I that stood on a pedestal, clad in gold and silk, the picture of the Mother of God. At the bailes it was I that the young men sought, and it was for me, señor, that Juan Perez had a knife plunged between his shoulders, one dark night, long ago. It was long ago, señor; it was long ago.

"I was beautiful, señor, and I knew my beauty. I was proud, proud of my dark eyes, of my golden shoulders, of the hair that fell about me like a garment to the ground when I unrolled it in the sun, after

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the bath at the spring. I was loved, señor; I was desired; my fame was all over Negros and had no boundaries but the sea; but I, I loved no one; I railed and scoffed at all; I loved no one, till he came.

"Then, señor, railing and scoffing died upon my lips; all things hard and mean died within me, and I felt my heart open, bloom, till it seemed my breast would not hold it. Ah, those were happy days, señor; days of beauty. Then the sky was blue, the sun was golden, the breeze was soft—it was long ago, señor; it was long ago. He was my sun, and the warmth and the beauty of him entered my heart till it burst into bloom like the purple moon-flower. We were of different race, but he taught me. He taught me, ah, many things, but what are they, señor, what is anything, compared to love? And he taught me to love. In the evenings, after sundown, we roamed the groves together, in the pale moonshine, and the sea shimmered and the trees whispered, and in my ear was the music of his voice, on my hand the caress of his hand—ah, señor, señor, why do these things stay with us; why, when they pass, do they not leave us, and not stay and stay and stay and torment and torture, hooked to our hearts with double barbs—señor, you who know so many things, can you tell me that?

"Listen, señor! Over there, where the river goes into the sea and the bamboos grow almost into the

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sky, he built a little nipa house. And it was ours, ours, all our own; and it was there that we lived. *Lived*, you understand; it is true that some of his time was passed elsewhere; he had the cuartel and his soldiers, but it was here that he lived, for it was here that he loved. Señor, in that little house by the side of the sea, it was there that happiness dwelled, happiness such as there never had been, such as there never will be. Señor, I was beautiful then—now I am old and dried; I chew betel; I drink tuba; I spit. But this is not all the work of years. I might have grown old as the corn grows old—golden-ripe, but now, you see, I do not care. He taught me, then he left me, and my heart fell back like a rock, aye, and lower than he had found it.

"For, of course, he left me, señor. I have learned since it is the way—you whites, you always leave. He went back to his Spain. He was to return in a year. The year passed and he did not come back. Then another and another. It was many years before he returned. The little hut in the bamboos by the river sagged, drooped, rotted; till there was left nothing but the four big corner-posts of narra standing upright, with between them a little mound upon which the grass grew high, a little mound like a grave, the grave of our love. I grew old with the waiting, the longing; my heart was all alone, all alone; and when

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he landed again, in the green dawn, one day, he did not know the woman squatting on the beach, so near that one of his soldiers pushed her away with his foot to let him pass. He came not alone, señor. With him was a white woman, his wife, with eagle nose and proud bearing and skin like the flesh of the coconut. He did not allow his soldiers to carry her, but went in himself, all booted, to the hips in the surf. His arm went around her waist; but, señor, she only looked that her dress would not touch the water. And I knew within me that when he had forsaken me for her, love had lost.

"I did not die, señor, although I thought I would as I sat there long after he had gone, sat there through the biting of the midday sun till the poisoned breath of the night blew into my face. I went back to my hut and lived. I lived as others; I married, I bore children. These children have borne children; their children have borne children. I lived, but I did not love.

"And he, he also lived, and his wife had children. He lived, but he did not love, señor.

"And thus year passed after year. I saw him little. Once, at sundown, as I was crossing the plaza the portals of his stone mansion clanged open and his carriage rolled out. I saw them pass, he and his wife, she straight and proud, he leaning forward a

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little, as if tired, and as long as the carriage was in sight I saw them, side by side, but both looking straight ahead—far, far ahead, as if seeking something—and not once at each other. And he, he saw me not at all.

"One night, señor, the baguio swept the land, as it will to-day soon. There were shrieks all night, and the sea-roar and the tree-roar filled the darkness.

"And, in the morning, señor, as the sun rose upon the ruins of the night, there was noise and crying and a moving to and fro among the people of the pueblo. Squads of soldiers tramped about, taos beat the bush, and bloodhounds sniffed the ground. People whispered that the Commandante had left his house in the evening and had not yet returned.

"They found him, señor, in the bamboos by the river, midst the rotting remains of an old hut. One of the big corner posts had fallen upon him, and he lay there dead, stretched across the grass-grown mound that looked like a grave.

"But I had found him first, señor. And in his hand there was a locket, and in the locket there was a wisp of hair. And the hair was not of his wife."

Marietta stopped. Her mouth twisted in a convulsive grimace and two glistening things ran down the lines of her cheek.

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And outside, with a long-drawn wail, the baguio at length swooped down upon us. The hut shuddered like a live thing, the trees clashed, the sea pounded and hissed. But in the dark, silent, immovable, squatting in infinite lassitude of posture, Marietta wept, wept over the past, the past with its irrevocable ruins, the past, gone beyond recalling, beyond amendment, but still with her, ever with her, with its double-barbed torture.

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XIII

THE PREROGATIVE

LITTLE Carnota Roa was dead, and they were burying him.

The father came first, bearing the coffin on his shoulder. He was a mañangete; that is, for a living he climbed the coconut trees, hanging his buckets till full of tuba sap and then carrying them, balanced at the ends of a bamboo pole, seven miles to the pueblo, on the trot. This occupation had made him very strong, so that now he bore the little box as if it were a feather. It was a pretty coffin. On a frame of bamboo sticks they had stretched a new patadyon, bright red and yellow, and on this they had stuck rosettes of white, pink, and blue tissue paper. It was beautiful. The brother followed the father. He carried a big shovel for the hole that had to be dug over there, in the black ooze of the cemetery, amid bones of men and carabaos. He wore a camisa, but no pantaloons, for they were very poor. Behind the brother came the mother. From her armpits a flaming red patadyon fell to her naked feet, red being the colour that must be worn for children and

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Carnota being only six. In her left hand she carried a big, black cotton umbrella; in her right hand she carried a tallow candle. The tiny flame sputtered and crackled in the stifling air and a thread of vapour rose from it toward heaven, humble incense praying to the Great God for the little soul ascending to Him.

The forlorn procession, man with coffin, boy with shovel, woman with candle, wound through the high grass across the plaza. The passage of a ditch caused some disorder. From the coffin, leaping across on the man's shoulder, a pink-and-blue rosette fell. The woman picked it up and they stopped while she pinned it back with a bamboo thorn. During the operation the candle dropped and went out. The man laid the coffin down, scratched some matches and finally relit it. Meanwhile the boy sat down on the shovel. He was very small and the shovel was very big. At last the man picked up the coffin, the boy picked up the shovel, and they moved on to the church.

The church was closed, for the padres had been driven out by the revolution two years before and had never returned. So the coffin was laid on the ground at the great barred doors, a naïve little object begging for a mite of the holy emanation that still clung about the great building as some vague odour of

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incense. The mother let tallow drip upon the frame, then stuck the candle upright into it. She opened the big umbrella and set it down so that the stinging sun-rays of noon should not shine through the thin cloth of the coffin into the closed eyes of Carnota. The man crouched down against the church wall, the boy sat on the shovel, and the woman squatted on her heels by her husband.

It was noon, and the perpendicular sun dripped molten lead upon the land. The tin roof of the church crackled, white with heat; the tin roof of the school crackled back to it; the heat, reverberated from one to the other, fell into the space between, and the pink-and-blue rosettes on the coffin shrunk like sensitive things.

A big fly buzzed near and the woman wafted it away. A little fly struck the candle and boiled to death in the molten tallow. From a hole in the church wall a big gee-kaw lizard uttered his hoarse, spasmodic cry three times, then stopped, smothered by the heat. Ten feet away a carabao plumped into a mud hole with a cool, squashy sound. A heavy silence fell upon the plaza, punctuated only by the raucous breathing of a big American cavalry-horse, dying of the surra by the cuartel.

The door of the school-house opened, and the Maestro came out. Almost at the same time the

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Lieutenant stepped out of the cuartel. He stopped to look at the horse and the Maestro joined him.

The animal, a big gray, was standing with his four legs wide apart, like the tripod of a camera. His ribs stood out like the ribs of a long-stranded derelict; his legs were puffed up as big as barrels, and a viscous fluid oozed from his nostrils. A cloud of flies buzzed about this already half-carrion flesh.

The Maestro looked into the patient, bulging, blood-shot eyes.

"He will die?" he asked.

"Yes, they all die," said the officer.

"Why don't you have it shot?"

The officer smiled, a trifle embarrassed.

"Well," he said, "you know they're great on red-tape in the army. If the horse dies naturally, the post-surgeon can fill out a comparatively brief report; if he orders it shot, he will have to write out some five foolscap pages. The Doc., you know, is pretty lazy; so he chooses the short report."

"I see," said the Maestro.

They separated. The forlorn group at the church door drew a shrug of the shoulders from the officer. The Maestro stopped and approached it.

The woman nudged the man with her elbow. "The Maestro!" she whispered, awestruck.

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They scrambled to their feet and stood respectfully before him. Their downcast eyes peered at him half-anxious, half-wondering. For he was a strange person, the Maestro. Carnota had often told about him.

The first day he had come to school he had been very angry because, turning around upon the crash of a chart, upset by one of the boys in a sly antic, he had found all the index-fingers converging dutifully upon the abashed culprit.

He was very queer. He did not like the boys to tell on each other.

Every morning he made them go through violent movements with their arms, their legs, their bodies; and they were very tired, for the palay crop had failed and they had little in their stomachs.

But if he was queer at school, he was still more queer at home.

One Saturday afternoon, Carnota, peering with his brother into the Maestro's house, had retreated suddenly, very much awed and astonished.

For the Maestro, in his shirt sleeves, was insanely pounding away at a big, round ball that hung from the ceiling by a string. He hit and hit and hit, and the ball rebounded from his fist to the ceiling so fast that it sounded like the escribiente beating a bandillo upon his drum, only much louder.

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The man and the woman stood before the Maestro, thinking of these things. And he stood before them, also thinking. He was before a result, and he wondered if it was good.

He thought of the little boy. He saw him again as he had seen him on his first day as Teacher of Balangilang—a little niño with a big round head sunk in between sharp shoulders, and big brown eyes that looked up into his own, half-scared, half-loving. He was a very little boy, Carnota, and his peculiar uncertainty of movement made him still more babyish. His face was dirty and his nose needed a handkerchief. His camisa was open in front, and the abdomen projected over the trouser-band in a soft roll of fat. Somehow that was what remained the most vividly in the Maestro's memory—the vision of that roll of baby-flesh that had suddenly filled his heart with unmanly softness.

That was the day of the "my" and "your" struggle.

"Do you see the hat?" the Maestro had asked.

"Yiss, I ssee dde hhett," staccattoed the class in answer.

"My hat," said the Maestro, pointing to his cap; "your hat," he said, pointing to the reduced version of a dilapidated nipa roof which served to cover Car-

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nota's head. "Now, [pointing to his own], do you see my hat?"

"Yiss, I sse my hett," answered the urchin confidently.

"No, no," said the Maestro. "This is my hat, not your hat; it is my hat. Do you see my hat, my, my hat?"

"Yiss, I see my, my hhett," answered Carnota, his eyes alight with sweet obedience.

The Maestro paused and wiped his brow with his handkerchief.

"Now, let us begin again," he went on with determination in his eye. "My hat, your hat; your hat, my hat. This is my hat; this is your hat. Now, show me your hat."

"Your hat," said Carnota, pointing to his own.

"No, no, that is not my hat; that is your hat; this is my hat, that is your hat. Now, show me my hat, my hat."

"My hat, my hat!" shouted Carnota, triumphantly pointing to the Maestro's.

"Oh, Lordy," muttered the Maestro. He looked down half-angrily. Two brown eyes and an uplifted nose were turned up toward him in absolute, admiring confidence, and his annoyance flew away as by enchantment. But he could not bear to disillusion the child with further elucidation, so it was many days

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before Carnota ceased mixing his pronouns with calm unconcern.

He forced his thoughts onward to later and less pleasant memories.

First had come the cattle-pest, which had killed all the carabaos; then the surra, which had killed all the horses; then the drought, just at palay-sowing, baking the ground so hard that the wooden plows made only derisive scratches. Now, it is true, the cholera was coming down the coast to restore the balance. But it should have come first. The palay crop had failed and there was nothing to eat.

There had been little to eat for weeks, and the children had begun to droop and wither. Every morning the Maestro cursed under his breath as he looked upon his waning audience. He could do little more than swear, for it would have taken a hundred times his salary to feed them all, and half of that went home religiously every month to a younger brother who was playing end on the Yale team. So, not being able to help them all, he had come to the determination to feed none. Which did not prevent him from smuggling little Carnota into his house every morning, to send him forth again with grains of mush sticking to his nose.

But this did not stop Carnota's head from sink-

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ing daily deeper between his shoulders nor the peculiar uncertainty of movements to gain and gain on him till, sometimes, when walking, he would fall suddenly without cause, as if he had stepped into a hole.

The attendance dropped and dropped, and the Maestro did not like to look at his reports. At last, one morning, Carnota himself failed to come to school. He did not come the next day, nor the next. The Maestro went to the tumble-down nipa shack by the river. He found the boy lying on a mat, on the bamboo floor. He could not move.

"Yiss, I ssee dde hhett," he murmured when the Maestro asked him how he felt.

The Maestro went to see the Post-Surgeon. But the Post-Surgeon had been in the Philippines four years. That is, his ideal of life now was to slop about his room all day in a kimona, smoking cigarette after cigarette and drinking whiskey-and-soda after whiskey-and-soda. To go out and see a sick child, especially when that sick child happened to have a brown skin, demanded an effort absolutely colossal for the corroded shreds of his moral strength. It took several days of begging, remonstrance, appeal, almost threats to galvanize the dead fibres. At last the Doctor slipped into a khaki and walked a hundred yards with the Maestro to the hut by the river.

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He examined the boy with a vague, returning ghost of professional interest.

"Curvature of the spine," he said at length.

"No cure?" asked the Maestro.

"No, he'll die; it may take several years."

"Will he suffer?"

The surgeon pointed to the child. The little body was vibrating in exquisite torture and cold beads of sweat were welling up on the stoical Malay face.

That night the Maestro went to the Post Hospital and asked the steward for some morphine.

"The dose is——" the steward started to say, giving him the pellets.

"I know, I know," the Maestro broke out hastily. "I've used it often."

He did not know the dose, but he did not want to know it.

He went back to Carnota. He found him with his sharp knees pressed tight against his chin.

He gave him several pellets. He did not know what was the proper dose, but he knew that this one was surely a highly improper one, and that is all he wanted to know.

The little boy had gone to sleep with a deep, restful sigh.

And now he was there, beneath the pink-and-blue rosettes.

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The man and the woman were becoming uneasy beneath the vacant-eyed scrutiny of the Maestro. Finally the father stooped, wound his arms about the coffin, and looked up questioningly into the Maestro's face.

"Yes," nodded the Maestro, "I will go with you."

The man heaved the coffin to his shoulder. The boy took the shovel, the woman the candle, and they started in a file. The Maestro followed and took the shovel from the boy.

At the cemetery the father began to dig in the black ooze, but the Maestro stopped him. He led them to a little knoll close by beneath a giant mango tree. The soil was dry there, and, taking off his jacket, the Maestro toiled till a little hole was ready.

They lowered the paper-frilled box into it, then they scraped back the earth. The father went into the jungle and came back with a cross made of two bamboo sticks. He planted the cross and the Maestro placed a few stones about it.

Then they walked back to the pueblo.

"Are you very sad?" asked the Maestro of the woman.

"Oho," she answered, "muy triste."

But she had not understood the question. She had had nine children, and eight were buried. As far back as she could remember Death had never let by a year

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without entering her hut. She had long ceased feeling.

They came to the plaza. The old cavalry horse was still standing as before, his swollen legs spread in a wide base, his head dropped to the ground, his patient, bulging eyes red with blood. His rattling, dolorous breath, above the humming undertone of carrion-flies, was the only break in the heated silence.

The Maestro looked at the animal. His chin dropped to his chest.

He raised his head with a sharp movement and walked on.

"I have done well," he said.

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XIV

THE CONFLUENCE

IT was a mistake from the first. The post was not at all for a woman, but Miss Terrill was unaware of that. She had just come to Bacolod *via* San Francisco, Manila, and Ilo-Ilo, by means, successively, of a big white army transport full of other ingenuous pedagogues; a wheezy but impudent little Spanish steamer, which aggressively shoved its nose under every ripple of the inter-island seas; a languid-sailed lorcha, loaded with pigs, dogs, and brownies, and finally a dizzy banca, which, perched upon the tip-foam of a curling comber, outriggers spread out like wings, landed her high up on a golden beach—fresh, dainty, and composed like a coloured album picture. So, when out of the hat in which the Division Superintendent was thoughtfully shuffling little slips of paper representing the towns of his terra incognita, she drew the name of Barang, she took it as much of a lark. Immediately she ran to a map, found the little black dot down in the southern part of Negros, and pronounced it "cute." She seemed prone, it must be

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said, to take things that way. She was a very young girl, so young that the officers of the Post raised their eyebrows and muttered under their breaths when they learned where she was going. A certain second lieutenant, Saunders by name, and very fresh from West Point, went so far in fact as to offer to arrange it so that she should stay in Bacolod, at least as long as he were there, and afterwards—any place where he might be. But she laughed sweetly at this proffer, and put it from her promptly and decisively, though her blue eyes, at the young fellow's sudden show of despair, shone a moment with a tenderness—maternal he called it afterward—that somehow left him without bitterness and full of reverence.

Here it must be explained for future understanding that Rumour, a most vigorous Dame in the Philippines, forthwith pounced upon this little incident and made off with it north and south. North the development of the tale was rapid indeed; by the time it reached Escalante it dealt with the marriage of Miss Terrill to the fat old colonel of the Post. South, progress was more modest; at Himamaylan and Cantalacan, towns nearest to Barang, it gave merely the news of the formal engagement of Miss Terrill to Lieutenant Saunders. Which freak of Dame Rumour was precious indeed, in that it led to the complications that make this story.

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The affair of her assignment continued to be much of a lark during the two weeks spent in Bacolod awaiting transportation. It was still a lark when the launch came and her trunk, in the loading, fell into the surf and the hombres in charge of it kept dry by the simple expedient of standing upon it. And the long, hard trip in the launch, laden to the gunwales with supplies for a military post still further than her own town, also was a lark, although at sunset the sky drew down in a black vault beneath which the little steamer seemed very small and very lone, and a wind arose which sent her plunging beneath tons of swirling water, and later, when the sea had calmed, the Tagal pilot got lost in the blinding downpour of rain and ran her gently into a perpendicular wall from which they backed with a poignant feeling that it was only the superstructure backing thus away, that the bottom was still on the rock—a feeling which proved baseless, but which kept them tense the night long, speaking in whispers and treading the deck a-tiptoe. The world was still joyous when they crashed through a fish-corral and her chair, caught by one of the poles, whisked her instantaneously from bow to stern. But when they anchored beyond the edge of a long reef, and the sun rose glaringly upon the shore, it must be admitted that her heroic little heart sank a bit. On the other side of

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the reef the waters ended in rippling purple shallows; and then there emerged a low bank of mud—a livid yellow mud, flaccid and spongy, corroded with trickly streams that ran ink. At the upper end of this bank, flanked by four leafless leprous palms, there rose a long building, askew upon its rotting piles, with torn tin roof and shutters fallen outward. In front, very white against the gray façade, the blue sky, the yellow mud, a pole sprang up with a faded American flag wrapped dejectedly about its top. Embracing the bank, the two curved arms of a river came down in slow gurgitation of liquid ooze between screens of black-green vegetation.

"This is Himamaylan, little mother," said the young lieutenant (he had fallen rather easily into the relation imposed by her). "This is Himamaylan. Wish it were your station; you've twelve more miles overland."

Now this thoughtful preference for Himamaylan (seeing what Himamaylan was) hardly promised for her own station. But she resolutely gulped down a certain tightening of the throat. "How jolly!" she said.

Saunders looked at her rather long. "What a darling you are!" he murmured. And the tone was hardly filial.

Which caused her to hurry her preparations for

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landing. A native standing to his knees in the mud, after a good deal of vocalising from the lieutenant, listlessly strolled to a decrepit banca, bottom up in the shallows, flopped it over, baled it out with a coconut shell, tied up the shaky outriggers with bejuca, and paddled leisurely, with an air of supreme indifference, to the counter of the launch. "I'll go ahead and reconnoitre," said the lieutenant, springing into it ; "it's only six, and Wilson (the American teacher of the station) is probably not up yet." Miss Terrill saw him paddled to the shore, saw him land and go up the rude causeway. At each step the stone under him sank as in a jelly and his foot whisked out in a spatter of mud; at each step her heart followed the stone in its sinking movement. He disappeared into the great ruined building. She waited, it seemed a long time. The padron of the launch began a muttered discourse upon the sin of delay with an ebbing tide. The sun rose higher, poured its accusing glare upon the squalor of the scene. The hombre in the banca pulled his wide-brimmed straw hat over his eyes, curled in the bow, and went to sleep. The mud began to crawl with little black crabs. "Cheer up!" she said to herself in a crisp intonation, like the note of a bird.

The Lieutenant reappeared at the head of a dozen villainous duplicates of the man in the banca. He

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paddled up. "All right," he said. "I have cargadores. Wilson will arrange things to get you to your town. We'll land your stuff first; by that time he'll be presentable."

One by one her boxes were thrown into the banca, paddled ashore, and carried to the door of the big building, the convento of the friars before the revolution had driven them out. Then very ceremoniously, while the padron warned about further delay, Saunders handed her into the little canoe, like a princess into her gondola, out again on shore, and helped her over the first and worst part of the causeway.

"I must go now," he said. "Wilson is waiting for you at the door and that launch is beginning to thump bottom. And please, once more; won't you come back to Bacolod?"

She lifted her clear eyes to him and shook her head gently. "But you are a dear good boy," she said.

To the subtle maternal tone of this, there was no replying. He bowed low over her hand and turned back.

She started up right away. A great loneliness exhaled itself from the land. She did not look behind, but toiled stolidly toward the building.

Tied to one of the verandah posts, a native pony, short-necked, compact, muscular, was pawing the ground. She stopped and looked at it, gaining from

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it the first comfort received of things since her arrival. It was carefully groomed. The bay flanks shone like silk; the mane, parted, fell fluffily on each side of the curved neck, the forelock dangling roguishly between the eyes. Beneath the polished saddle a red blanket added a touch of colour, almost of coquetry. The little animal stood there like a protest against the ambient discouragement.

But a white-garbed man was at the door. "Good-morning, Mr. Wilson," she said gaily; "what a nice horse you have there!"

"Good-morning, Miss Terrill," he answered, a gleam of approval in his pale, tired eyes; "but that's not my horse. Mine—well, it's like everything else about here"—and in a heavy gesture he passed his hand over the musty landscape.

She met the owner upstairs.

He was a young man with slender waist and broad shoulders. Leather-gaitered, buttoned to the chin in khaki, a big Colt hanging to his loose belt, he gave Miss Terrill an impression of elastic efficiency very pleasing. But still more pleasing, she thought very secretly, were his eyes, golden-brown, soft and rather grave. He was horribly reticent though. He let Wilson do the talking; leaning against the window-sill, he contented himself with short remarks dropped at long intervals like the sudden toning of a deep bell,

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and also with a consideration of her, serious and thorough like the pondering of a problem. It was something entirely different from that to which she was accustomed. She was not vain; but still, she had often seen herself, mirrored, as it were, in the eyes of men; and she knew that in her short khaki skirt, her long, tawny leggins, her wide-collared blouse, her soft felt hat beneath which her hair fluffed, light and golden as sun-kissed vapour, she was—well, picturesque at least. But here was a judgment that reserved itself, an admiration very much under check. His very position as he stood there, his glances downward upon her, gave him a subtle strategic superiority. It was rather irritating; and when he bowed and excused himself out of the room, her return salute was stiff with a stiffness foreign to her sweet nature. But immediately she found herself listening intently, oblivious of Mr. Wilson, listening to the steps springing down the stairs, stamping upon the flagging of the court, stopping beneath the verandah. There was a short silence, then a sudden clatter of hoofs. Unconsciously she was up and at the window—and he was gliding rapidly along the palm-lined road leading away from the sea, erect in the saddle, his waist giving flexibly to the pace of the pony.

"Oh," she ejaculated; "is he going away?"

"Yes," said Mr. Wilson; "back to his station at

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Cantalacan. It's ten miles beyond yours. He'll arrange things for you at Barang."

Then, strangely enough, the desolation of the surrounding landscape brusquely whelmed her again. She felt very much alone with this Mr. Wilson, with his stoop of the shoulders, his weary eyes, his attitude of profound lassitude.

"I must start off for my station," she said decidedly.

II

Miss Terrill leaned at the window of her new home, looking out into the dark of the plaza. She had put out the lamp, the room behind her also was dark, and between these two obscurities she felt rather lone. At intervals alarmingly frequent her rallying cry, "cheer up," chirped in the heated silence; but difficult it was for the spirit to obey the command of the lips. She had gone through a great deal of late—not so much in actual hardship; she could bear that buoyantly; but little by little the oppression of the Land had heaped upon her and she felt a very little girl indeed. Something akin to self-compassion filled her being as she dwelled over the events of the past days: the sudden and thorough inefficiency of Mr. Wilson when it came to arranging for her departure; the long enervating wait for mythical carts, for carabaos

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that did not come; then, after she had taken hold of things and the evasive Presidente, suddenly alacritous at the stamp of her foot, like a magician produced animals and vehicles by the dozen, the long ride to her station—the bumping and creaking of the ox-cart; the mud, the fearful bottomless mud; the miring in the rice lands, beneath the leaden sun, in the pestilential swamp; the miles paced slow as the crawl of an hour-hand while time slid by and the day died in gloomy splendour. And then the entry into the pueblo at midnight, amid the howl of dogs, the croak of frogs, the shrill concert of katydids; the dinner at the Presidente's, with this people of alien race, of dark skins, of incomprehensible tongue; the appalling lack of comfort, of cleanliness—and then the night : she would never forget it, that first night in Barang. Her cot had been placed in a big bare room. Through the torn roof she could see a lone star. There was rice stored in the corner of the room, and giant rats thundered over the loose planking, squealed and fought, while outside in the scum of the ditches the beasts of humidity shrilled in rasping clamour. Then the arising in the morning, weary to death, shrinking in fear at the thought of the first survey, in the inexorable sunlight, of the place which was to be her abode for twelve long months at least; and that first look—the wide, grass-dishevelled plaza with

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the carabaos wallowing in the mud holes, the ponies dying of surra at their pickets, the leprous-walled, crumbling church across, the thousand leaning, rotting nipa shacks, the musty mountains steaming in the east.

Afterward she had had a pleasant surprise. A house had been engaged for her, the Presidente announced, by Don Francisco. She went right away to view it. It stood facing the plaza, pointed-roofed, post-elevated, between shimmering bananas, a new nipa hut, clean and strong. The ground beneath was white with powdered lime, a reassuring carbolicky odour hovered about and she was pleased by the chance for picturesque decoration offered by the rich, nut-brown nipa of the interior. But while she stood in the centre of the sala, planning, a muchacho in immaculate camisa stood before her. "Don Francisco has sent me to you; I am to be your servant," he said in the precise English of one carefully instructed. He proved a treasure, that boy. Then, pieces of furniture began to arrive one by one. She did not understand at first, but the owners, salaaming behind their sweating cargadores, explained that they were to be hers during her stay. She offered money; they refused. Don Francisco had asked them to do this; they were always glad to obey Don Francisco.

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This was the third time in as many minutes that she had heard that name. When she was alone with Vincente, the new muchacho, she asked, "Who is your master?"

"You are to be my master," he answered in the tone of one who knows well his lesson.

"But who was your master; who sent you?"

"Don Francisco," he said.

"But who is Don Francisco?"

"Don Francisco; the Maestro," he answered, evidently astonished at her obtuse ignorance.

But she divined now and her cheeks flushed. It was the Maestro of Cantalacan. Wilson had introduced him as Mr. Tillman. "Don Francisco" was much better, she reflected.

She had set briskly to work at her installation. She accepted a few pieces of the proffered furniture—quaint old hand-carved things of incredibly heavy woods; she performed wonders with boxes and chintz; Isio mats enlivened the meerschaum of walls and ceiling, the few pictures and flags left of her college days were hung; red narra boards tied with golden abaca along the walls made a place for her books; a big square severe table, with her blotters, pads, inkstands, pens, and pencils upon it, took an aspect inviting of studious hours. But when she rested and looked about her for the subtle feeling of coziness

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and warmth which usually follows such toil, as it must to the birds who have built their nest, she found with consternation that it was not there—the feeling of intimacy, of home, was not there. She changed the petates, she moved the pictures, she hung orchids at the windows, arranged a panoply of native hats and spears over the door, fringed the grass-cloth portières. But it was useless. The feeling would not come. And she realised that it would never come; that all these efforts were puerilities before the great crushing assertion of the land—the grass-dishevelled plaza, the ruined church, glistening in the white sun, the palms, the steaming mountain, the brown populations; that before this tranquil, brooding, all-powerful Presence, all her little defenses of art and adornment shrivelled, dried into dust as cardboard toys in a furnace. It was like hiding behind leaves from God.

She turned to her work with an enfevered zeal. She found a tumble-down nipa shed where some twenty half-naked, half-starved, miserable little beings, herded every morning by the municipal police, gathered beneath the stick of a slovenly, dull-eyed man, with a gibberish of English—the native teacher appointed temporarily by the military government. The school supplies had not come yet; there were no charts, no books, no slates, no paper, no pencils. The

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children squatted on the damp earth, crushed and apathetic.

"Well, I can at least love them," she said to herself.

It was easy for her to love children. She loved everything that was small—babies, kittens, puppies, birds; and flowers:—she called them baby-flowers when they were satisfyingly little. She taught the children trifles that did not amount to much; but beneath the tenderness of her presence these starved plants began to put forth blossoms. The dark eyes opened in wonder, softened in reverence. One day one of the little girls took her hand going home from school; and after that she was always followed by a dozen demure little maids that took her hand a few steps in turn. She taught the class a song, and since there was not much to do, in the dearth of what was needed, they often sang, in their low, plaintive notes, their eyes fixed upon her in mute adoration.

They called her Mathilda, and she thought it very sweet.

But still the Presence weighed upon her with its crushing, tranquil malevolence, its external signs the sun, white and ghastly, the mountains, steaming in mustiness, the fronds of palms, heavy, motionless, metallic. She felt the weight of it as of some physical thing there upon her breast; beneath it her sleep

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grew torpid, her gestures languid, her eyelids drooped heavy upon the unfading blue beneath.

This day the obsession had been more poignant than ever. For in the morning she had found the schoolhouse deserted. The *cosecha* had begun, and the children had all wandered off early to a big hacienda ten miles off to pick rice. The hours had dragged, long as death, empty as Infinity. And now she leaned, a little limply, at her window, between the dark behind and the dark before. "Cheer up," she chirped valiantly, but her heart would not answer.

Then, far down the road, consoling, familiar, she heard the soft pit-a-pat of hoofs. The sound neared, swelled, drummed in a crescendo that seemed to beat in her heart. Detaching itself suddenly from the shadow, as if of its tenuous substance, there appeared the vague form of a man in the saddle, pliant-waisted, broad-shouldered. A singular panic possessed her; she drew aside behind the wall and peered, her hands upon her breast. With a rattle of stone and a spark the horse stopped there in the darkness in front. The shadowy rider seemed to turn in the saddle; she felt his eyes scrutinising the darkened façade, the lightless windows. She panted. The horse champed resoundingly; her lips parted as if to speak.

Then, very distinct in the silence, she heard the

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decided whirr of a quirt. The form in the saddle bent forward; the horse rose in a jump. For a second the shadow of horse and man rose and fell, then it plunged into the darkness of which it seemed a part. The drumming of hoofs sounded down the road, farther, fainter, became a mere vibration, ceased.

But she stood there listening long after sound had died. And when she moved off toward her little cot, it was very wearily, and upon it she collapsed very suddenly.

She knew what was the matter with her now. She was lonely; God, how lonely!

III

And thus as a shadow, flitting, mysterious, almost uncorporeal, she was to know him for a long time. It might be during the day, at school; her eyes, straying out of the open door, saw him cross the plaza to the rapid pace of his bay pony, erect beneath the leaden downpour of heat, his sombrero firm down upon his eyes, his waist giving pliantly to the swing of the saddle. He slid off with what seemed to her singular speed, like a being unreal, elusive, legendary; he was across the plaza ere her eyes were fairly fixed upon him, was disappearing along the palm-lined road into the wilderness, into the bosom

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of the mountain, seeming to await him, dark, brooding, inscrutable. And when the red dot of the saddle-blanket had lost itself into the venomous green of the distance, she would turn, a little listlessly, to her class.

"Come, children, we will sing," she would say.

And they sang, in their low, weird voices, their plaintive modification of some old home song. "How sadly they sing," she murmured; "how sad it all is."

Or it would be at night when, standing at her darkened window, she heard the sound of hoofs reverberated in her heart, and he passed, a mere shadow, immediately swallowed in the gloom. Sometimes she remained at the window, peering into the darkness; at other times she withdrew in unreasoning timidity into the farther depths of the sala, and stood there, panting, till the hoof-beats had sunk into silence. For a while, with a temerity that seemed to her immense, she left her lamp lighted behind her; but when finally he did come, at the sight of the luminous circle upon the road he circled wide into the night. She could divine him there, in the profundity of gloom; it seemed to her that he had dismounted, that he stood long, looking toward her. She trembled with excitement, keenly aware of her conspicuousness in the light. Then the horse rustled softly

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through the high cogon, struck the road again below the house, galloped off in sudden clatter.

These brusque apparitions left her very lonely.

One day, though, she caught him. Her watch had run down and as she crossed the plaza to the schoolhouse, she was aware by the position of the sun that she was much ahead of the correct time. There was little about her lone home, however, to call her back; so she pushed on, a little pale at the thought of the long day ahead. Then as she was almost at the door, she started. A bay pony was before her, stamping but obedient to the long reins dropped Western fashion to the ground. Its flanks shone like silk, the long mane fell on both sides of the short curved neck, the forelock dangled roguishly over the eyes. A red blanket flamed beneath the saddle.

For a minute she stood still, startled like an elf, her breath coming swift between her parted lips, poised in panicky indecision. Then with a lithe resolute movement she stepped within.

He was standing in the centre of the room, examining with critical eye the torn roof, the sagging walls, the earthen floor. When he had become aware of her presence he merely took off his hat in silent greeting that held subtle homage. His eyes passed gravely over her. He should have been pleased indeed with the tremulous colour of her cheek, the radi-

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ance of her glance. She wore a simple dress of blue linen with a sailor-blouse whose wide turned-down collar left a triangle of palpitating whiteness below the throat; she was hatless, and her hair lay upon her head with incredible lightness, like a golden vapour. A curl of it fell over her eyes, and she drew it back slowly in a graceful movement of her arm, bare to the elbow. But even as she gazed up at him, the suspicion of tenderness in his eye went out abruptly; a stubborn reservation lowered over them like a curtain.

"You are early," he said.

"Yes," she answered, and the word came like a sigh. She sat down, a little wearily, upon the only chair. "Yes," she repeated; "it's going to be a long day."

He scanned her with rapid, questioning concern; but immediately there returned the rigid reserve that baffled her.

"I must go," he said decidedly. "I've a new barrio school up there in the bosque."

That was all. He strode across the room to the door, gathered up the reins, mounted and was off, leaving her alone in the big empty shed. After a while she looked up. Far toward the hills a little red spot was disappearing.

The following day the municipal treasurer came to her and told her what she should have known be-

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fore—that the taxes had been collected, and that there were some thousand pesos disponible for the pueblo school. So she saw, with an interest that made the days sweeter, the roof rethatched, the walls bolstered, a floor of bamboo being laid, and the Chino carpenter slowly evolving with his rough tools a dozen rude benches. A few days later an oldish little mild-eyed man presented himself to her. He told her that he had been one of Don Francisco's assistants, and was now to be hers.

This new proof of lofty and patronising care exasperated her. She sent the man back with a message declaring that she needed no assistant.

Two weeks later he was again before her with a note. With a vague feeling of disappointment she saw that it was typewritten. It said:

"The Provincial Superintendent has transferred Abada from my town to yours. I cannot and you must not disregard the order."

Her cheeks flamed a little when she reflected that the two weeks passed between the two offers were just time enough for the exchange of correspondence between Cantalacan and Bacolod.

But she soon found Abada invaluable. He had evidently been subjected to a rigid training; naturally he took upon himself all the smaller troublesome details of her work. Also he knew his own people thor-

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oughly and was precious in lifting for her the uniform veil of stolidity. And he had ingenuity. He propounded a plan by which the children came washed to school; he interested the parents in the clothing of their offspring, so that now the room rustled with starch. The rivalry of the town factions he diverted adroitly into a race for the favour of the Maestra.

After a while, though, she noticed that Abada's brilliant suggestions came always on Monday mornings; also that on Sundays the little mild man, a stick in hand, wended his way across the plaza and then down the road leading to Cantalacan. This vexed her, and the next propositions of her assistant were ignominiously rejected. That morning she mapped out her own course. She planted vines that with tropical vigour forthwith began to climb the bare walls. At the windows she hung wonderful orchids. She draped two American flags in flaming panoply behind her desk, improvised of dry goods boxes. The supplies had come from Bacolod (very strangely, in ox-carts belonging to the municipality of Cantalacan). The maps upon the walls, the blackboards and charts upon their tripods, the shelves of books gave to the place an air of study and quiet. Thanks to Abada's constant visits to parents, his free use (she did not know that) of Don Francisco's

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name, the attendance was rising by leaps and bounds; the schoolhouse was full of gentle brown goblins. Her soul was sweet with the feeling of being loved.

And yet she could not shake the old tyranny. An emptiness was within her; an emptiness it was, and yet it weighed like lead. Above, about her, the alien, incomprehensible Land flamed, fierce, inimical. She dreamed of grassy meadows beneath apple trees; through the flowering branches voices passed, voices of her own kin and race, sympathetic and intimate.

One day she had an idea that filled her with wild joy. She would give a dinner and invite Mr. Wilson and Mr. Tillman.

The invitations were sent and accepted. On Saturday she went to the market. She passed amid the squatting women like a humming bird, flitting hither and thither, stopping a moment to sip here or there, then whirring off again with her store. And when she returned, her tawny parasol tilted back upon her shoulder in an attitude a little weary, her two boys behind her bore baskets filled with wonderful and coloured things. She overhauled her stores and set to work immediately. A man she sent down to the sea to fish for her a lapo-lapo. And all day she measured and mixed and beat and prepared for the morrow. She was up with the sun the next day, and all morning she flitted about, humming like a bee building its

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honey-home, a white apron pinned to her dress, her face flushed, her hands floury. At noon Wilson came in. She greeted him joyously, and then leaving him with her latest magazine, whirred off again to some mysterious final crisis in the kitchen.

At one o'clock a tao came with a note. Mr. Tillman was very sorry, but something unexpected and imperative had called him away. He would not be present.

Her hands dropped to her sides; a great disappointment filled her soul.

She forgot it partly in the performance of her duties as hostess. Abada took the place set for the missing one. Wilson lost his eternal discouragement and livened in a way that made her glad. Late in the afternoon he left.

"Lordie, what a little wife she'll make," he murmured to himself, riding in the gloaming. "And that fool Saunders, what's the matter with him, anyway, leaving her down there so long!"

From which it would appear that Dame Rumour had not found it imperative to correct her first erroneous report.

As for Miss Terrill, her brave "cheer up" checked her just as she was on the point of idiotically weeping over the ruins of a splendid chocolate cake.

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IV

The rains began. Seated at her window she would hear a roaring tattoo in the grove of abaca palms to the south. The noise neared, rose, thundered. Long, lithe coconuts began an inexplicable bending to and fro, their tops circling in trembling descent almost to earth, then swinging back to the spring of the bow-tense trunks in a movement exaggerated and violent like that of some stage tempest. Out of the grove, beaten, trampled down, there advanced into the open a black wall of rain, perpendicular from earth to sky. Ahead of it, dust, twigs, rubbish suddenly ascended to heaven in rotary spirals; trees were flayed of their leaves, roofs blew up like gigantic bats. Then her own house, strongly built, shook as with earthquake; the thatch of the roof sprang vertical, like hair that stiffens with fear, and between the interstices she saw the muddy sky stream by. A powder of debris, of dry rot, snowed down upon the table, the books, the chairs; little lizards, unperched, struck the floor with a squeak like that of a mechanical doll, remained as dead for long minutes, then scampered across the room and up the walls again; great black spiders, centipedes, scorpions fell; sometimes a large rat. Then the nipa clicked back to position as a box is shut; a breathless silence, a heavy immobility petri-

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fied the world. There came three or four detached, resounding raps upon the roof, and suddenly a furious, roaring beating as of stones coming down, great stones, chuted in thousands, in millions—and the church, the plaza, the mountain, the whole Land disappeared in a yellow swirl of waters. It rained thus for hours, for days, for weeks. The leaden vault of the sky seemed irreparably cracked, letting down the liquid hoardings of ages. It rained, in drops big like eggs, falling so swiftly that they welded sky to earth as with iron bars; it rained, heavily, monotonously, mournfully. The first wild, triumphant burst over, the elements seemed to have settled down to their task with a quiet, brooding patience, an immense persistence of unalterable purpose. It seemed that it would rain thus for years, for ages, for inconceivable æons. The world was rain, the future was rain; she lived in a chaos of water. The whole earth softened, dissolved; it rolled through eternity, a silent, viscous ball of ooze spattering the stars. Inside her hut a musty leprosy crept over things; her clothes rotted in her trunk, mushrooms sprang overnight upon her books; her very soul, it seemed to her, disintegrated before this malevolent persistence of elemental purpose. A black mournfulness was over her like a veil.

She yet saw him sometimes. Out of the obscure chaos he emerged, a vague shadow; behind the vit-

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rious sheet of waters he passed, wrapped in a great cape, erect, immovable upon the horse, struggling up to its knees in mud, the heavy flaps of his sombrero down over his face, leaving to view but the hatchet-carved chin. She knew now where he had been that Sunday. A discharged negro soldier had been terrorising a little barrio to the south. The Maestro had ridden there and going directly to the bully, had disarmed him and ordered him out of the district.

And now, up in the hills, but daily nearer to the coast towns, a band of tulisanes were committing depredations. Barrios were burned; *principales* suspected of giving information to the authorities were tortured. And it was said that a negro renegade was the leader of the band.

He was present to her in ways other than these shadowy apparitions. One day men had placed upon her nipa roof a sheeting of zinc; she found later that the material came from the ruined convento of Cantalacan. She felt about her a fostering care, immense, enveloping like the Rains, mysterious, impalpable like them. But it was impersonal, far, cold —like the Justice of God. It left her very lonely.

One morning at sun-up he rode into the pueblo at the head of a dozen men. By their uniforms, their rusty Remingtons, she knew them as the municipal

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police of Cantalacan. For a week there had been a respite of the rains and the roads were fairly firm; but the outfit came in mud-crusted to the eyes, the horses staggering and dripping foam. They clattered rapidly past the house and stopped before the Casa Popular. The Maestro dismounted, but she noticed that before he allowed the others to do so, he sent a man ahead to the outskirts of the pueblo on the side opposite to that by which they had come; she could see him, sharply delineated against the rising sun, scanning the horizon. The Maestro sprang up the bamboo steps of the municipal house; his voice rang sharp and incisive. There was a running to and fro of muchachos, and man after man, the town police assembled. She had noted before their slovenliness, but now, as they mingled with the men of Cantalacan, this appeared emphasised. There was something brisk and efficient about everything that came from Cantalacan, it seemed. The Maestro reappeared and mounted. He placed half of his men in the van, the other half in the rear, the Barang contingent being framed between, and putting himself at the head started out of the pueblo by the road opposite to that by which he had come in. She saw him for a while, pliant in the saddle, leaning forward, pressing the pace, the rest of the troop pellmell after him, rising and falling one after the other, their broad

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hats flapping. Suddenly he seemed to go through the crust of the earth; man after man disappeared after him; the last laggard dropped out of sight. They were crossing the river. They reappeared, toiling slowly up the farther bank, bunched for a moment, then vanished between the palms.

Toward evening she saw them return. He was not riding in front. But between the horses, formed in hollow square, something limp swung from side to side—a litter borne by four men.

V

What followed came back to her afterward with strange blending always of vague unreality and glaring vividness.

Very calmly she went down to the Casa Popular, before which the calvacade was stopping. On the ground she saw the litter with its lithe form silhouetted beneath the blanket. "He is dead," she said to herself with weird certainty. All about her, men were talking excitedly; she did not hear a word, and yet, later, all that they said came back to her, complete to every inflection.

The Maestro had received secret information of an attack planned by Carr, the negro renegade, upon Barang; hence the move of the morning. The two parties had met upon the road; both had taken to

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the ditch and had peppered away at each other for a while. Then the Maestro, who had kept on his horse to hold his men better in hand, had been struck by a chance bullet; the pony, zipped by the same fire, had thrown him. But as, seizing the opportunity, Carr charged forward with a yell of triumph, the prostrate man, raising himself on his elbow with a last effort, had shot him through the head with his revolver. This sudden reverse had scattered the outlaws.

She did not hear this; it came back to her later. She stood very still; and her heart, with each solemn beat, said, "He is dead."

A desire came to her to see him once more. She moved to the litter. She lowered the blanket. Upon the very white forehead the black hair was matted; matted with the toil done for her, in her defense. She separated the curls between her fingers, smoothing them in long caressing movements. And then she saw stirring between the pale lips the suspicion of a breath.

Instantly the dreamy lethargy that enshrouded her dropped like a cloak; and she was athrill with a fierce desire for action. "To my home, quick, quick!" she cried to the men. They took up the litter and started toward the house. But they were inconceivably slow. They jostled him. She pushed one of the

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carriers aside and herself took a pole. Finally he lay upon her little cot.

She tore open the khaki blouse with its spot of rust above the heart. The blue shirt beneath was soggy and dripping. With her scissors she cut off both garments, then washed the bared flesh. But there was something which would not wash off—a little bluish spot from which, constantly reforming, red lines radiated like the cracks of a broken pane.

He opened his eyes just then; they glared wild for a moment, settled upon her, softened, then with a sharp intake of breath he was unconscious again. She noticed that his right shoulder had a strange, caved-in appearance. She felt the joint lightly. The shoulder was dislocated.

Her lips tightened. That first must be set, for from it he suffered. She had heard of it as something very difficult. She was a girl, weak, lone, ignorant, and yet it must be done.

She called Vincente and together they tried to draw the arm back into its socket. It was sickening work. At every effort the strong shoulder muscles contracted in reflex resistance, and they were helpless as babes.

She desisted and thought, with an exasperated concentration of all her faculties. A snatch of chance

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knowledge came back to her. In her trunk she had a little medicine chest given to her by loving friends when she had started on her long voyage. She had laughed at the time; she pounced upon it now like a wild animal upon food. She looked into it in anguished questioning. Yes, there it was—a phial labeled chloroform.

She sent Vincente out for Benito. He was a mañangete, and very strong. He came, stood upon his immense bare feet before her, his straw hat in his hand, and she looked with thankfulness upon the bull-like neck, at the arms, bulging in ridges beneath the camisa. Once she had cared for his sick baby-girl, and now he adored her.

They moved the cot against three of the roof-sustaining posts and fastened it tight to them. They strapped the unconscious man to the cot.

The crucial moment came now. Right here she might murder him with criminal ignorance. She accepted the hazard.

She uncorked the little bottle, spilled some of its contents upon a wad of cotton, and applied this to the pinched nostrils. He struggled; his left arm tugged at the strap holding it till the muscles were tense to breaking. She persisted—and suddenly his effort collapsed; with a shuddering sigh his whole body relaxed liquidly.

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She made use of Benito now. At her command he took between his iron fingers the wounded man's wrist. She placed her soft hands upon the tao's corded arms. He tugged; she directed. From her tapering fingers there flowed into the stolid muscle of the machine-man a subtle fluid of tender intelligence. In the commonness of their work they became as one: he the body, she the soul. The chloroform had had its effect; the shoulder muscle loosened, elastic, to the steady pull. The arm lengthened, almost dismeasurably. She panted. Beneath the suggestion of her fingers Benito gave a sudden sharp movement up and to the left. There was a resounding click—and then Benito, Vincente, the man in the cot, the whole room floated slowly upward, leaving her in a lone black hole.

But from this weakness she emerged to the urgent call of what there was yet to do. She wrapped tape about both shoulders to keep the set member in place. Then she turned to the wound.

She saw with relief that the stagnant red lake which had covered it at first had not returned. But there was still the little blue hole with its radiation as of cracked glass. She fingered it lightly. In there was a bullet, and it must be gotten out.

Pale, with eyes closed, she gently inserted her little finger into the warm flesh. It was as if she were dig-

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ging into her own heart. After a while she felt a hard, rough-edged object. She gasped in a strange mingling of physical horror and spiritual ecstasy. The bullet had sunk a bare inch.

She looked through the chest, but there was nothing for the necessary extraction. She tried the scissors; they slipped and revolved about the leaden slug without seizing it. She wrapped twine thick about the blades. This time they caught. There was a momentary resistance; she tugged firmly, it seemed at the very core of her being. Slowly at first, then faster, the distorted bit of lead slid through the flesh, then popped out and rolled upon the floor. A little ruby foam came to the surface of the wound.

The whole world floated away gently, except a Voice, a thundering, all-filling Voice; "Señora, Señora," it crashed and reverberated through the infinity of Time and Space. It fell gradually into a call, gentle but insistent, that she must obey; and she opened her eyes upon the face of Vincente, yellow with fear; and it was he that was calling "Señora, Señora."

She sprang to her feet at the command of her purpose. From the torn wound, little red drops were arising like bubbles one by one—the drops of his life. She dressed the wound carefully. A great weariness fell about her like a pall; she sat down at

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the head of the bed. Something soft and delicious entered her soul.

She remained there till dawn, a sweet content singing at her heart. The oppression of Things that had crushed her for so many months had lifted; her being distended in ecstatic repose. He slept, still in the torpor of exhaustion, calm like a statue; she watched him, watched the white forehead with the black curls damp upon it, the eyes, closed in the shadow of the long lashes; watched this helplessness with a gentle feeling of maternal possession. His features were relaxed in lassitude; the corners of the mouth drew down slightly, in an expression a little tremulous, as that of a child who has cried and is not yet quite consoled. A great tenderness dissolved her being.

Toward morning, however, his cheeks flushed dull red and he began to toss restlessly upon the narrow couch. She placed her hand upon his forehead and found it burning. She redressed the wound, placed fresh bandages about the shoulder; but the fever did not abate. All day she fought it, handicapped by her poverty of means. And then as the sun had set in black-and-blood-portent and the night fell like a great velvet cloak from the sky, Fear crept into the little hut; and all night as she sat there by the cot, it was at her elbow, spectral, dilated-eyed, and cold.

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He tossed and tossed in convulsive starts till the cane bed creaked and cried. He muttered incessantly, words without end, rapid as the tick of a telegraphic receiver. At times she could understand.

"The silence!" he would say; "the silence!"

He stopped a moment, his brows frowned, then the words came again, slow, as in painful mental analysis. "Their ways are different," he said; "their language incomprehensible. It is silence—God, what silence!"

He rose to a sitting posture and listened long, intently. "Nothing," he said, falling back, discouraged; "silence," he whispered.

Then, "And the mountain, the musty mountain, how it weighs!"

He was quiet for a long while. Then he spoke one word.

"Lone"—and the word drawled like a plaint.

A great wonder possessed her. So he also had felt what she had felt, had suffered what she had suffered. Through the armour of efficiency, of alertness, had penetrated the oppression of the Land. He, the strong, the vigorous, the self-reliant, had suffered as she, the weak, lonely girl. She passed her hand softly over his hot forehead; she bent down in an impulse to kiss. But he was talking again, one sentence repeated in swinging sing-song.

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"Saunders, Saunders, may he make her happy; Saunders, Saunders, may he make her happy." He fell into a rhythmic beat, like the marching cadence of a drum. "Saunders, Saunders, may he make her happy," he repeated, over and over again, in ceaseless sequence.

She drew back, afraid. Saunders—that was the young lieutenant at Bacolod. But who was the mysterious "Her" that out of the mechanical rise and fall of the sentence rose distinct in an emphasis of wistful tenderness—a sense of profanation whelmed her; she should not listen to that.

She left the room and went below to rouse Vincente. But he was in the death-like stupor that is the sleep of the native. She could not wake him, make him understand what she wanted—that he should watch over his master. She had to go back, and as she re-entered the room he was still murmuring, but with slowing cadence, like a clock that runs down: "Saunders, Saunders, may he make her happy."

When finally the thing had died upon his lips, he was quiet a long time, and she remained there, listening to the beat of her own heart. The dawn was entering cracks and windows in grayish humid flow. She shivered a little; a great discouragement dissolved her strength. She moved to the window and looked out upon the misty landscape. After a while

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the sun appeared, a red ball of fire on the top cone of Canlaon. It rose, freed itself of the enveloping net of vapour, shone down, white, clear, inexorable; the mountain slopes began to steam.

A movement behind her made her turn.

He had risen and was sitting upright, his free arm raised high toward heaven, and in impassioned accents he was declaiming:

"Star of my Life," he cried; "Star of my Life, cold in the black sky, far, ah, how far! Star of my Life, in spite of all, in spite of thee, thou art *my* Star, *my* Star!"

He sank back as if broken with the effort. She placed her hand upon his brow and beneath it she felt the heat slowly recede; soon he was sleeping peacefully like a child.

"Star of my Life!" she murmured wonderingly.

VI

She was very happy that day. He slept heavily, broken with fatigue and loss of blood; she hovered about him like a butterfly, finding a thousand little precious things to do. In the afternoon she decided that she must rest. She had improvised with screens a room in the sala; but she slept only in snatches. She woke often with a delicious feeling of duty to

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perform; and then she would glide to the door and from the sill watched him sleeping calmly within. She was no longer lonely. All night he slept thus; then, as in the morning she flitted about the room touching things here and there, suddenly she knew that he had awakened. She did not turn toward him, but she could feel his eyes, softly luminous, following her gravely. She slid out of the room. He had not spoken.

But outside the world was dull. She returned. As she entered, the eyes were still on the door, wistful; but immediately, like a veil there came over them the old stubborn reserve.

"I must go," he said. "I suppose I got laid up in that fool fracas over there. You've been very good to me. I must go."

He tried to raise himself; but a gray pallour sprang to his face. "Sh-sh-sh," she hissed gently. "You must be a good little boy and do as I say. You must not move."

A great weariness was upon him; his bones were as water; and beneath the soft "sh-sh-sh" this weakness became a dreamy and very pleasant feeling indeed. "I'll be a good boy," he murmured obediently. Suddenly she realised that he was very young after all; which gave her a very maternal tone as she said, "Drink this; it will give you strength."

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The days that followed had a taste of honey. A dreamy passiveness held him in its thrall and she was about him always like a sweet despotism.

But slowly, as he grew stronger, came the change she dreaded. A corselet of reserve drew about him; the old subtle reservation again veiled his eyes. He spoke often of going.

On the fourth day the call of a bugle drew her to the window, and a troop of cavalry was sweeping into the plaza. At its head was young Saunders. Rumours of ladrone raids reaching Bacolod had caused the sending of a detachment; it was to garrison Barang indefinitely.

She learned this from Saunders; for he called that evening and together they sat at the bedside of the wounded man. She smiled upon the young fellow a slightly malicious smile, for he seemed very much consoled indeed. Later, as he left her at the head of the stairs, he confided that the colonel's niece was now at the post, and that she was—gee!—a queen!

"Sure *you* won't?" he asked in smiling apology.

"Sure I won't," she answered with responsive gaiety, but reiteration of intention.

"Good-night, little mother," he said.

He came every evening after that, and the man propped up on the pillows listened with wonder to their light and impersonal prattle.

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The last day came. Early in the morning the Maestro called Vincente, and with his help put on the khaki, the leather puttees, the belt with its burden loose along the thigh. The pony, all saddled, was standing outside. He meant to slip out unnoticed.

But once in the sala a sudden remorse detained him in hesitation. For the good of his soul, he knew he must not see her. And yet, it seemed black ingratitude, this sneaking departure. His eyes wandered over the table with a vague idea of leaving a written good-by——

A gliding swish behind him made him turn. She stood in the frame of the door, looking at him. She was wrapped in a loose gown, mauve-tinted, that stopped in a square before reaching the neck. Her hair fell in two braids behind her, leaving a haze of gold shimmering before the eyes; and her eyes shone through, calm, wondering, and blue. A vestige of pure, white sleep still hung about her cloyingly, and she was adorable.

"You are going?" she asked—and the words floated slowly, as if held back by some indefinable regret.

"Yes," he said; "I must go back."

She stood looking slightly past him at something very far, into an infinity that was desolate; her eyes widened, purpled.

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"I shall be lonely," she said, impersonally, as if reading into that distance.

He started a little. After a while he said, hesitatingly: "The troop are here now; the lieutenant——"

But she stood there, very still, staring at the future, stretching long ahead as the past mirrored, the lone, inexorable future reflecting the lone, hard past. She moved forward a step, and that step was very weary.

"I shall be lonely," she repeated.

A tremulous wonder came into his eyes.

But suddenly she had crumpled upon the long wicker chair, her face hidden in her arms, and her shoulders began to rise and fall softly.

He stood there, stupefied, watching the gentle swell and ebb, and slowly the wonder in his eyes grew to the light ineffable. He moved forward. He touched her timidly.

"Girl!" he said in awed murmur, as if in the hush of a cathedral, "Girl, can it be!"

But she remained gently weeping. He took her arms and raised her slowly; and they stood before each other, their twined hands hanging loose between them, their eyes into each other's, gravely reading.

"Girl!" he said again, and this time the tone held the ecstasy of revelation.

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"Boy!" she smiled back through the sacred dew of her tears.

He drew her to him, and she wept upon his shoulder in sweet abandonment, and his heart swelled within him in immense tenderness.

"Star of my Life!" he murmured.

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XV

THE CALL

DELAROCHE told me the thing himself immediately after it had happened; and no one has been able to get a word of it from him since. At the time he was much overwrought; in fact, to an Anglo-Saxon, was somewhat of a sight (he has French blood in him, and it's apt to crop out when he least expects it); but if ever I saw Truth manifested, it was in that choking, panting, sobbing utterance of the man.

Delaroche was one of the thousand pedagogues which the American government sent to flood these benighted isles with the lime light of civilisation. His post was Cabancalan. You don't know Cabancalan, do you? Southern part of Negros, twenty miles from the mouth of the Ilog. I rode through there once—God, a lonely, desolate place! A thousand tumble-down nipa shacks, a crumbling church, musty mountains to the east, not a white man within thirty miles, and the natives themselves away below the average—on the edge of savagery.

Well, Delaroche stood it for six months, then went daffy and sent for the girl he loved in the States.

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And she came, the ten thousand miles, and he met her in Ilo-Ilo and they were married, and he took her across on a prao to her new home—God!

And then one night, some two months after, she began to die. "She began to die." That's the way he told it to me.

As he came back from a ride to one of his barrio schools he found her weeping, with her face in her pillow. She gently refused to tell him the reason (poor little girl, he probably would not have understood!); but later she was saying small incoherent things, and then he knew she was in a fever. Then she began to groan gently with each exhaling breath, and a great fear started to gnaw at his heart.

It was one of these nights when the heat weighs upon you like the tomb. The blinds were all raised, and strange, incongruous insects flopped in and buzzed about the lamp, while outside the beasts of humidity vibrated in endless shrill cry; and rhythming this clamour, to the man watching there, came that low, gentle groaning. And he feared.

You don't understand. He told me, and I also, probably, did not understand. She was a gentle, soft creature, made all for love and sacrifice, and with something childish in her that drew the hearts of men in great tenderness. He was a somewhat gloomy fellow, with great asperities in his character and a

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flaming will. He craved for sacrifice, and she gave it all to him, and yet with her little baby ways created in him the illusion that *he* was the protector.

And now, as he sat beneath the oppression of the heated night, by her side, with that continuous, soft plaint in his ears, he began to see, he began to see,—ah, many little things that he should have seen, that he had not seen, that,—yes,—that he had refused to see.

When he would return from his long rides to far barrios after leaving her all day face to face with the poignant loneliness of her life, he was wont to pick up a book and plunge into it for the evening. Several times he had seen tears come to her eyes as he did this, and then, with laughing, false, lying surprise, would ask her what was the matter, at which she smiled and shook her head gently.

There were many other things like that, but, he told me, this was the picture which tortured him in endless repetition that night. He saw himself returning from his barrio-ride; he picked up a book and read, and then tears started in her eyes. At intervals he raised the mosquito-bar and looked at her and spoke to her, a great tenderness in his throat; but she did not answer, merely lay with her head on her left arm, and softly with each breath came the little plaint, patient and submissive, and it tore his

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heart. Then he sat down again at his vigil, with a great muffled fear a-pound in his breast, and then again he saw the picture:—He came back from his barrio-ride, picked up a book and read, and tears started in her eyes.

That's how he passed the night. At dawn, a great longing to do something took hold of him, and, leaving her, he went out into the pueblo. There was not a physician within fifty miles; it was the rainy season and each mile was ten. He knew it, yet he searched madly for what he knew he could not find. Finally he returned, and as he looked upon her she gripped his arm. "Don't, don't," she said, and he burst into tears. She had felt his absence.

Then people, the poor lowly folk of the village, began to troop in with many "pobrecitas" and pitying exclamations and rude, naïve gifts. Among them were two little girls who stood awed at the door. He remembered them. When his wife had first come and they strolled in the evening together, the little girls would follow them at a distance; then, encouraged by her gracious presence, they had come nearer and nearer night after night, till finally she had found what they longed for. They wanted to touch her hand. And after that the husband and the wife had had to steal out on their evening walks; for, if seen by the little girls, the lady had to give one

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hand to each, leaving the man to follow behind alone.

They were poor, dirty little things, but when they stood there, one with a soiled, over-ripe banana, the other with a tobacco leaf, that they had probably stolen at the market, he stooped down and kissed them on the forehead.

Then he padlocked the door to be alone and took his station by the side of the little cot; and the morning passed as the night had, and he felt himself slowly becoming mad. In the afternoon a thought made his heart thump.

At Sibalay, twenty miles below the mouth of the Ilog, there was then a post of native constabulary, and once every two months a launch from Ilo-Ilo came to stock it with provisions. He had made a note of the dates the boat was to come. He looked among his papers and found it. It was due that very day. Since morning, while he sat stupid there, the boat had been discharging cargo; that very evening it would leave for Ilo-Ilo, and in Ilo-Ilo there were Americans, doctors, hospitals, hope!

And there was still a chance. The boat, in its course back to Ilo-Ilo, must cross the mouth of the Ilog. There might be time to intercept it.

He ran out of the house and down to the river; and the best he could find after an hour's search were two

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old bancas, mouldy and full of water and each with an outrigger broken; but he lashed them together, with the remaining outriggers on the outside. Then he stormed at the Casa Popular till they gave him the town prisoners, a villainous six. He then had his wife carried on her cot to the boat, and they started down the river.

From the beginning everything went wrong. He had counted upon the swollen river-current; he found that the sea tide was on the flood and backing it up. The impressed prisoners were sullen, and after he saw that promises of reward had no effect, he made them work with his revolver at their backs. The river wound interminably, and then another obstacle confronted them. The wind rose, and every time the turn of the river made it head on, they had to slow up, for the short, choppy waves dashed into the boats, threatening to swamp them. The men grew more defiant, and once he was obliged to fire over their heads to keep them at their paddles. Thus they went down the river, between the high palm-lined banks, the boats leaking, the tide purring against them, the men straining, with Fear upon them, and he standing at the stern, tense as a maniac, feeling Hope slowly and inexorably slipping from him. And all the time, from the cot at the bottom of the boat, came the soft, continuous, patient plaint.

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When they reached the mouth of the river, the surf was booming on the bar and they could not cross. It was dark, and in the distance a red and a green light were passing slowly.

They paddled back five miles up the river to the pueblo of Ilog and camped in the deserted convent. Toward midnight, White, the constabulary officer, came along. He was on his way to Sibalay, but the mud had killed his horse and he had had to stop.

The two men had a conference. Then White impressed two carabaos from the presidente and started off in a drizzling rain. There was an army wagon, with two American horses, at Sibalay, and he was going after them. With the wagon, Delaroche could perhaps make Pulupondan, sixty miles to the north, and catch the little steamer that plied between that town and Ilo-Ilo.

All night Delaroche sat by the bed of his wife, in the big, empty, ruined convent. The rain drummed fiercely upon the tin roof, giant rats scurried to and fro in the darkness, and the night long there came from the cot the desolate plaint. Once, toward dawn, she started up suddenly and he caught her. "Laddie, laddie!" she cried, with a great joy in her voice as she felt his presence. Then she fell back into the stupor.

At noon the wagon came, driven by an old army

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packer, a long lanky Westerner. The cot was placed upon it and fastened, and they started. It was in the midst of the rainy season; the roads were bottomless, and progress was fearfully slow. Twice, before reaching Jimamaylan, the wagon dropped into a hole and could not be budged. The men went out into the fields and captured carabaos, and after countless efforts unmired it. At Jimamaylan, fifteen miles from the start, the horses were so plainly given out that they had to stop. They passed the night in the hut of the Presidente. The driver cooked their food and Delaroche filled the canteens with boiled water for the morrow, for they were on the edge of the cholera district. His wife was in the same condition.

They started early the next morning, but calamities began to overtake them. They were mired for an hour soon after the start. Then the tree carried away and they had to improvise a new one. Near Binalbagan the off horse dropped, foundered. They stole carabaos from the fields and went on. Darkness overtook them at Jinagaran, and they had gone only ten miles.

All night long Delaroche listened to the gentle wail, and by morning it had grown very weak. And then, as the sun rose a few miles from Jinagaran, she died.

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"She died." That's the way he said it.

And the wagon went on with the dead woman, and Delaroche kneeling with his head on her pillow, close to hers. And after a while he began calling her, first softly, with gentle insistence, "Girlie! Girlie!" Then louder and louder as she did not answer, in a long, agonised cry, "Girlie! Girlie!"

They were going through the cholera district now, and they passed deserted barrios with great, white crosses painted across the doors and windows of the emptied huts; and now and then thin, cadaverous, weird beings looked at them pass from caved-in eyes, looked at the labouring, sobbing carabaos; at the driver on the seat of the lurching wagon, urging with cry and gesture; at the cot, with its rigid form faintly outlined beneath the blankets, and the man kneeling by it; and, above the shouts of the driver, the panting of the animals, the creaking of the wagon, they heard that great ceaseless agonised cry: "Girlie! Girlie!"

All day, and the next, and the next, they went on thus, a spectral sight. I asked the driver about it later.

"Yes," he said. "I kept a-going because I knew that he just couldn't bury her there. And all that day and all night, and all the next day and the next night, and the next and the next he just called her

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and called her and called her. I don't want to go through another thing like that, you can be sure. And she was dead, sir; she was dead, I tell you."

"But of course, she wasn't, you know she wasn't," I said: "You know she must have been alive. What makes you think she was dead?"

"She was dead, sir," he repeated stubbornly.

And Delaroche, when he told me, that one time his lips were unsealed in a burst of hysteria, said the same thing.

"She was dead, Romer," he said; "she was dead, I tell you. But I called her, called her. And I tell you I *called* her back. You see, it was impossible; I couldn't let her go like that. I called her back to me, *called* her back, I tell you!"

THE END

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